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## Spending on NHS will be capped

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

SPENDING on the National Health Service will be strictly capped for the first time under proposals announced yesterday to give GPs overall control of the £35 billion health budget.

GPs will take over responsibility for spending on hospital and primary care but if they overshoot on one item — such as drugs — they will have to cut other services. At the moment, GPs have an open-ended drugs budget and if they overspend they can call on the Treasury for more money — a practice that successive Tory administrations tried to overturn.

The new regime was announced as Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary unveiled a White Paper designed to create a modern health service that is the envy of the world and to break down the "Berlin

Wall" between health and social care.

To do that, he intended to abolish the NHS internal market, phase out GP fundholding and set up a 24-hour patients' helpline that can be used as an alternative to the 999 emergency service.

White Paper.....Page 11  
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He also promised that anyone with suspected cancer would see a specialist within two weeks and that a new institution would set national clinical standards of excellence. The White Paper, *The New NHS — Modern, Dependable*, also envisages savings of £1 billion through cutting red tape.

The most radical proposal, however, was for the NHS budget to be transferred to groups of GPs and community nurses, who would be able to buy most hospital and community care for their patients — including emergency care.

Groups of practices, representing about 100,000 people and comprising up to 50 GPs, would be given cash-limited "envelopes" to cover hospital and community care, prescriptions and surgeries.

Legislation would be introduced to allow these groups to set up as freestanding Primary Care Trusts, which would effectively run the NHS from 1999. The move will put doctors and nurses into the driving seat but will also mean that they will have to take on much more administration. Some GPs were baffled as to how 50 doctors would be able to decide how to spend their budget.

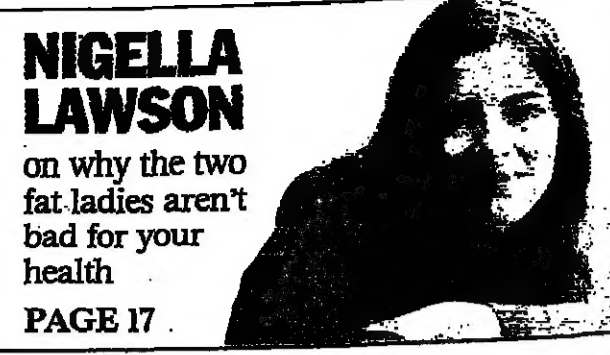
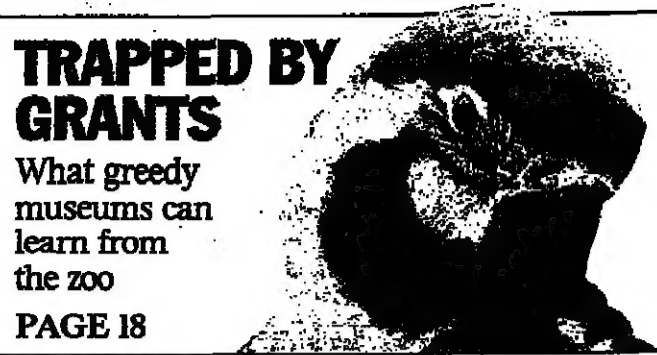
The proposals, described in a foreword by the Prime Minister as making the NHS "a beacon to the world", were attacked by doctors' representatives who feared that GPs would be blamed for cash shortages.

John Chisholm, chairman of the British Medical Association GPs' Committee, said that there was no mention of new resources. "Devolution might be used as a smokescreen to conceal underfunding. GPs could end up being given the influence they have been seeking, but becoming the fall guys."

Ministers argue that the changes will remove competition and stop NHS trusts pitting themselves against each other. Legislation will be introduced to make it a statutory requirement for health authorities to consult with hospital doctors, GPs and social services before drawing up three-year "rolling agreements". Health authorities will have less influence and are expected to dwindle in number.

In his Commons statement, Mr Dobson said that patients would get "swift access to care and treatment rather than being passed from pillar to post".

He added: "We will keep the separation between planning and providing services. But we will end competition and replace it with a new statutory duty of partnership so that local health services pull together rather than pull apart." In the next four years, the changes would "shift an extra £1 billion from bureaucracy into frontline patient services." John Maples, Shadow Health Secretary, said that the Government's policy objectives were the same as the Tories', but he said the White Paper showed a "touching old Labour faith in co-operation and goodwill". He said that the success of the changes would depend on how much power individual GPs had to balance clinical freedom with financial responsibility.



Richard Branson leaving his crew behind



The helium-filled balloon floats over the Moroccan desert as a stunned Richard Branson and his son Sam watch. The balloon broke free from its moorings after strong winds

FROM ANDREW PIERCE  
IN MARRAKESH

FIGHTER jets were preparing last night to shoot down Richard Branson's runaway balloon after it soared 60,000 ft over the Atlas mountains, zig-zagging in and out of Morocco and Algeria, with a Virgin Lear jet in pursuit.

The military aircraft will be ready to take off this morning, but the world's biggest balloon was dropping a thousand feet a minute last night, raising hopes that it would find its own way back to earth.

If it does, the Virgin crew intend to swoop before dawn to try to salvage the balloon before the sun can reheat the helium and send it upwards again. In that case, Virgin engineers say that the envelope — a million cubic metres of fabric weighing four tons — could float uninterrupted for three days, posing a serious risk to other aircraft.

## Jets may have to shoot down Virgin Challenger

Mr Branson, who had pleaded with the Algerian authorities not to turn their fire on the Virgin Challenger on its ill-fated maiden voyage in January, found himself in a completely different position. He said: "I'm now in the bizarre position of trying to persuade the Algerians, if necessary, to shoot it down."

25,000 ft. Mr Branson's dream of being the first person to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon appeared to be over.

Only on Monday, he had said that he was convinced that one of the five crews fighting to achieve the record would be successful this time. The Virgin crew were hoping last night that they would be able to retrieve the balloon, patch up any damage and relaunch later this month for yet another assault on the elusive record. But the time it could take to repair the envelope and prepare for take-off again could give rivals the edge.

Yesterday the Virgin team dispatched a Lear jet to track the balloon's progress as it raced over the snow-peaked

Continued on page 3, col 3

## Irvine makes Blair friend his adviser

By RICHARD FORD AND JAMES LANDALE

LORD IRVINE of Lairg yesterday became the first Lord Chancellor to have a special policy adviser when he appointed a close friend of the Prime Minister, Garry Hart, one of the country's leading planning solicitors, to join the Lord Chancellor's Department in March.

Mr Hart, aged 57, currently senior planning partner at Herbert Smith, a leading firm of London solicitors, will make a substantial financial sacrifice to join his old friend Lord Irvine. His salary will be £73,484 compared with an estimated £350,000 at present.

A spokesman at the Lord Chancellor's department said that the post was five days a week and was for an indefinite term. "Mr Hart will assist and advise the Lord Chancellor in the development and effective presentation of policy."

communication in the areas of policy analysis and advice and the presentation of policies and achievements. Mr Hart will have a role in support of the government interests with a degree of party political association which would not be appropriate for civil servants.

The announcement comes after the Lord Chancellor has faced criticism over a £650,000 refurbishment of his official residence using wallpaper that cost almost £60,000 and ridicule after he jokingly compared himself as Cardinal Wolsey.

There have been bruising encounters with other Ministers and unhappiness at his brusque manner in the department and Parliament.

It was made clear that Mr Hart, a close friend of the Blair, who is believed to be Continued on page 2, col 4



## Cambridge win

Cambridge recorded their fourth consecutive victory in the 116th University Match, beating Oxford 29-17. New Zealand's Paul Sturridge scored 14 of Cambridge's points with a try, penalty and three conversions. Page 48

## Toyota blow

Toyota will build a new £400 million plant in the northern French city of Valenciennes. The decision destroyed hopes for an extension of the plant in Burnaston, Derbyshire. Page 7

## Britannia may end her days on a canal

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH AND ALAN HAMILTON

THE Royal Yacht *Britannia* may sail into a less dignified retirement than the Queen would wish, with a permanent berth on the Manchester Ship Canal or at Leith Docks near Edinburgh.

George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, is expected to announce in the Commons today that eight serious bids for the 44-year-old vessel have been reduced to two. In either case, Britain's elegant floating ambassador will become a tourist attraction.

Ministers have ruled out proposals from groups bidding to have *Britannia* moored in the Pool of London, by the Millennium Dome at Greenwich, Canary Wharf on the Thames, Hartlepool, in her home port of Portsmouth, or on the Clyde where she has built. The Government has decided not to scrap the vessel, despite a remark by the Prin-

cess Royal while on board last week that she — and by implication the Queen — would prefer to see it scuttled.

The bid by the Manchester Ship Canal Company would transform the yacht into a floating stately home and the centrepiece of a £40 million heritage park at Barton, near a £600 million shopping and entertainment complex at Dumplington.

If the bid by Forth Ports succeeds, *Britannia* will find a home in a planned £50 million development of Edinburgh's docklands that will include a luxury ocean liner terminal, leisure facilities and shopping. The vessel itself would become a visitor attraction with conference and banqueting facilities.

The Queen will attend the final decommissioning ceremony of *Britannia* in Portsmouth tomorrow.



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# Fearsome reputation ends up in the bargain basement

THERE is an old *Punch* joke about a sign at a zoo: "WARNING: if attacked, this animal defends itself". Over in that noble zoo they call the House of Lords, this should hang from the bars of Lord Williams of Mostyn's cage — as Lord Tebbit found to his cost yesterday.

Admire or detest him (this sketch admires), Norman Tebbit is one of the wisest and most mordant men in British politics. And there is something wonderfully destructive in his soul.

It is said of Tebbit's first

lessons in game-shooting that the instructor would shout "Fire!" but the young Norman kept missing the bird. But when they tried shouting "Kill!", Tebbit bagged the bird first time.

Yesterday in the Lords, he had Lord Williams in his sights.

A small, mild-mannered

there be an unexpected vacancy.

But Lord Irvine of Lairg shows no signs of going, so Lord Tebbit began his question to Lord Williams yesterday with sarcastic felicitations to Williams (whose "charm" he praised) on the rumoured good news, which he said he hoped was true. Mostyn remained impassive.

Then Tebbit went onto the attack. He had asked the Government about the "scope" of the work of the Ministerial Group on the Family. "In these days, when



MATTHEW PARRIS  
POLITICAL SKETCH

the Government is going to have no more secrets," he sneered, "why, despite a number of written questions, are they unable to explain their definition of the family?"

Tebbit's purpose was clear: he has been a persistent critic of progressive notions in a sexually permissive age. He had come to the House of Lords to torment the La-

bour front bench on the subject.

Lord Williams began with a straight bat. The Government, he said, did not "seek to prescribe how people live their lives".

He was critical of those he had heard aptly described in a quote he had read: people "who cannot imagine that what does not accord with

their own ephemeral prejudice could be popular or morally defensible".

Lord Williams paused. That quote, he said, came from a book by Lord Tebbit. He had bought it in a second-hand bookshop in Moreton-in-Marsh. The book was priced by its publishers at £13.99 — UK only — "that's to stop those nasty foreign people reading it". Their lordships began to giggle.

But Lord Williams had not finished. The book had been republished, he revealed, "at £3.50". Then it had been

reduced to £2. The final reduction was to £1. "I bought it for 50 pence."

The bitter bit, Lord Tebbit did not come back for a second bite. We moved to the next question, from Lord Carver. This former Chief of the Defence Staff, Field Marshal and distinguished military historian, attacked Labour's nuclear defence policy from the Left. All the old familiar landmarks of British politics seem to be shifting.

But wait! As I write, Tony Blair is announcing that he will make our NHS "a beacon

to the world". Such modesty! We all know that it is Mr Blair himself who is the beacon.

Now he is to share beaconhood with the NHS. Only last October, he promised to make the whole country a beacon to the world. Already we are a beacon to Europe. Is the latest a regular beacon, a New Beacon or a People's beacon? How many beacons can we take?

This is getting confusing. Next time Mr Blair feels a beacon coming on, could we suggest a couple of aspirins and a darkened room?

## Blair heads for showdown over euro committee

BY PHILIP WEBSTER AND CHARLES BREMNER

TONY BLAIR was heading for his first serious confrontation in Europe last night after insisting that Britain must have a seat on a powerful new committee that will run the single currency.

The Prime Minister maintains that Britain should attend the Euro-X committee as a matter of course and be a participant, not an observer. Only in exceptional circumstances would it not attend.

In what was turning into a head-on clash with the French Government, which is leading the opposition to Britain's membership of the committee, Mr Blair was ringing round his fellow EU leaders warning that he would not allow Britain to be frozen out of key economic decisions. He was preparing to make a direct appeal to Chancellor Kohl of Germany to back Britain on an issue over which Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, was rebuffed last week.

During a one-hour meeting at Downing Street with Jean-Claude Juncker, the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Mr Blair accepted that there would be rare occasions when the countries outside the single currency would not be able to attend the committee, notably when the "ins" were discussing the exchange rate policy of an "out" currency which was due to join.

This was being seen as a concession by Mr Blair that might eventually contribute to a solution at the summit that begins in Luxembourg on Friday. In fact, he was giving away little because the Maastricht treaty already precludes the "out" countries from participating in exchange rate policy decisions by the "ins".

Mr Blair is clearly ready to take on the French. He and Mr Brown were furious last week over the attitude of

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the French Finance Minister who suggested that the euro would be a private "marriage" in which outsiders would not be welcome.

Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, kept up the firm line yesterday, saying that if Britain was not a member of the "ins" club it should not expect a seat at the table. "The rules have yet to be defined. But the UK, which invented clubs, should not complain at being excluded."

Mr Blair insisted yesterday that Ecofin — the council of finance ministers — must remain the main decision-making body on economic and financial matters. The Euro-X group would discuss many matters, such as employment policy, structural reform and labour market flexibility, in all of which Britain and the other "out" countries would want a proper say.

Mr Blair's official spokesman said: "We want the expectation to be that we should be in all these discussions not as observers but as participants. We want that to be the rule not the exception. Others want it the other way round."

Unless Mr Blair has al-



Juncker: hour of talks in Downing Street

ready won a private assurance of support from Herr Kohl, which is unlikely, it appeared last night that he was facing a bruising summit. Wim Kok, the Dutch Prime Minister and an influential figure at the summit, staked out his resistance to British participation in the planned Euro-X council. "If Britain doesn't want to have full participation in the euro from the beginning, then they should respect other's rights to have their own internal consultations."

Diplomats in Brussels are convinced that the usual summit chemistry will prevail, allowing the euro council to go ahead with formal EU blessing, while giving some role to Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Greece. The likely non-participants in the single currency, Goran Persson, the Swedish Prime Minister, said in Paris he thought a compromise deal was possible.

Pierre Moscovici, the abrasive French European Affairs Minister, said: "We want to do all we can to find an agreement, but there are limits... there should be no confusion between the euro council and the Ecofin."

Diplomats believe that it is unlikely that Mr Blair will want to pursue the Euro-X battle to the point of a crisis in his relations with the EU, just as the Government is taking over the presidency and working hard to establish Euro credentials for Britain after years of hostile cross-Channel relations under the Conservatives. Some Commission officials, annoyed by Mr Blair's claims to be leading Europe, see the quarrel as an example of the "naivety" of the new Government. "They think all they have to do is smile and say nice things and they will be welcomed with open arms," a German EU official said.



Lord Irvine and Garry Hart, the special adviser who will join him next year

## Soccer fan who scored with the Blair team

BY JAMES LANDALE AND RICHARD FORD

AS A senior partner in one of London's leading law firms, Garry Hart is an unusual choice of special adviser to the Lord Chancellor.

While most ministerial advisers are young, ambitious apparatchiks who have known little else other than working for the Labour Party, Mr Hart, 57, has no direct experience of the political frontline.

But as a prominent Labour-supporting lawyer who lives in Islington, North London, and is a family friend of Tony Blair, he is ideally suited. Like many in the Labour Government, he is also obsessed with soccer and an ardent fan of Ipswich FC. Mr Hart is from the town and was educated at its grammar school.

He is a senior partner with Herbert Smith, a position he will give up when he takes up his new post in March. He has known Lord Irvine of Lairg, both socially and professionally, for years. As one of the major London solicitors firms, Herbert Smith, has briefed 11 Kings Bench Walk,

the chambers headed by Lord Irvine until he entered government last May.

Although he has kept his political views largely private, Mr Hart has for some time been a member of the "1,000 Club" of Labour supporters who donate at least £1,000-a-year to the party, according to a source at Herbert Smith.

Mr Hart also has close links with other members of new Labour's "Islington ma-

fiar". His neighbour in one of the borough's smartest streets is Lord Falconer, of Thoroton, QC, the Solicitor-General.

Mr Hart joined Herbert Smith as an article clerk after graduating in law from University College in London. He has been a partner with the firm since 1971 and head of the property and planning department from 1988 until earlier this year.

His first marriage, from which he has three children,

ended in divorce in 1986 after 20 years. In the same year he married Valerie Davies, by whom he has two daughters. His second wife is also a solicitor and is head of the insolvency litigation department with Norton Rose, another major London law firm. They have a hill farm in Wales where they keep sheep and spend weekends away from London.

He is a freeman of the City of London, trustee of the Architecture Foundation and is currently chairman of the Trustees of the Almeida Theatre in Islington. He is also a member of the Law Society specialist planning panel and a governor of the Anglo-American Real Property Institute. A member of the Reform Club, he lists farming and travel as his recreations.

A source at Herbert Smith said: "Garry is a very young 57. He is a larger than life character, a great raconteur who is often asked to give after dinner speeches. He is very convivial but very switched on with a lot of nous."

### MAN IN THE NEWS

## Irvine adviser

Continued from page 1

godfather to one of their children, would not be a political adviser. However, his skills in human relations and in handling people are expected to help smooth feathers ruffled by Lord Irvine, both among ministerial colleagues and officials.

John Underwood, a solicitor who has known Mr Hart for some years, said last night: "He is a very very imaginative lawyer with a good creative grasp and strategic vision. He is excellent in terms of human relations."

Mr Underwood said that Mr Hart had a "very civilised" view of the world, was a fanatical supporter of Ipswich Town football club and had once described himself as a "working class libertine".

Last night some peers claimed that the decision to decision was a clear signal that Downing Street wanted to put a halt to a string of damaging press reports.

One senior Tory peer said: "I supposed the Lord Chancellor needs someone like this to look after him. He is incapable of doing it by himself unlike his predecessor (Lord Mackay of Clashfern) who would not even have known what a special adviser was."

In recent weeks the Lord Chancellor has also shown his vulnerability in Government. He has admitted making a mistake on a point of law about whether the proposed incorporation of the European Bill of Human Rights would introduce a privacy law by the back door into Britain.

## Life for Hindley justified by crime

BY RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE horror of the Moors murders justified the Home Secretary's decision that Myra Hindley should die in prison, the High Court was told yesterday.

Hindley's confession ten years ago to two further killings justified the increase of the minimum term she must serve from 30 years to a "whole life", the court heard. David Pannick, QC, for the Home Secretary, said that in her confession Hindley admitted two "pitiless" killings that were "the culmination of a series of five murders in which she had been involved."

Hindley, 55, was not in court to hear Mr Pannick oppose her challenge to a series of decisions to im-

a minimum term of a whole life for "retribution and deterrence". She is in Durham jail and has served 31 years of a sentence imposed at Chester Crown court in 1966 for the murders of Lesley Ann Downey, 10, and Edward Evans, aged 17.

The thirty-year tariff was imposed by Leon Brittan in 1985, two years before Hindley's confession, and it was increased to a whole life in 1990 by David Waddington, Edward Fitzgerald, QC, for Hindley, had said that it was unlawful for Mr Waddington to increase the tariff.

Mr Pannick said that parliament had "deliberately conferred a broad discretion on the Home Secretary. The hearing continues."

## Robinson accused of neglecting his duties

BY NICHOLAS WATT  
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

GEOFFREY ROBINSON, the multimillionaire Paymaster General, was accused last night of neglecting his ministerial duties because of his "obsession" with clearing his name.

Conservatives rounded on Mr Robinson after he put in a 20-minute appearance before the Commons standing committee considering the Government's Bank of England Bill.

The Paymaster General sat in silence at the meeting, even though the Treasury had earlier indicated that he would take an active role throughout the day. Instead Helen Liddell, the Economic Secretary, spoke for the Government.

After the meeting David Heathcoat-Amory, the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury who appeared for the Opposition, accused Mr Robinson of avoiding awkward questions about his offshore financial interests. On Monday Mr Robinson threatened to sue *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* for making "ill-informed and defamatory statements" about his financial affairs.

Mr Heathcoat-Amory said: "It seems to me that Mr Robinson is not discharging his functions as a Treasury minister. He is obsessed by his struggle to fend off the other questions. It is very odd."

A Treasury spokesman said last night that Mr Robinson had appeared at the committee to support Ms Liddell. The spokesman said: "Helen Liddell has the detailed knowledge of the clauses under consideration. Geoffrey Robinson was there to support her. Often ministers deal with different sections of Bills at standing committees." Earlier the Treasury had said that Mr Robinson would spend the whole day at the committee meeting.

## MP wants loans for libel suits

A Bill to turn the self-regulating Press Complaints Commission into a statutory body was given an unopposed first reading in the Commons, although it has no chance of becoming law. It was introduced by Anthony Steen, Tory MP for Totnes, who said that individuals should receive interest-free loans to pursue libel cases where the PCC thought there was a case, and that the ultimate deterrent for Editors who print "reckless and malicious" articles should be a one-day ban of their papers from sale.

### Oxford places

Oxford University took fewer state school pupils than expected this year — 41.6 per cent of places compared with 43.6 per cent last year. Independent school students got 49.1 per cent of places, up on 47.5 per cent. Other places went to overseas students.

### Benefit boost

David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, urged 16 and 17-year-olds who are in dead-end jobs or unemployed to return to study, noting that this would allow their families to receive up to £40 extra a week in benefits.

### Cancer test hope

Researchers yesterday launched a major screening trial of 50,000 volunteers for a bacterial infection common in 55 per cent of all stomach cancers. More than 6,000 stomach cancers diagnosed in Britain each year are linked to *Helicobacter pylori*.

### Time for tea

Weekly tea auctions which have been held in London for the past 163 years are to be wound up next year due to the computerisation and globalisation of the industry. The auctions will be held fortnightly from February and will finally end in June.

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Andrew Pierce watches end of Virgin chief's latest attempt to capture his round-the-world dream

# Branson sees balloon record hope drift away

RICHARD BRANSON was sitting in his hotel room in Marrakesh signing his will when the news came through that his renewed attempt to balloon around the world had been ended by a freak gust of wind which snapped the guy ropes and sent the helium-filled envelope drifting off without him.

A quick look out of the window confirmed the shattering news to the millionaire adventurer as he saw the silver-and-white balloon disappearing toward the Atlas Mountains.

Disaster struck while Mr Branson was making final preparations in his hotel suite, half a mile from the Moroccan launch site, only five hours before the scheduled lift-off.

Unexpectedly warm thermal currents of 14 knots lifted the one million cubic metre balloon when it was partially filled with four tonnes of helium. The effect was catastrophic. It lurched to the right and put intolerable strain on the 16 mooring ropes. One snapped. It sounded like a gunshot.

As panic set in, project director Mike Kendrick shouted: "For God's sake. We are

losing it. We are at crisis point."

As the 50 Virgin Challenger engineers desperately tried to stabilise the world's biggest balloon envelope, two more ropes snapped as the thermic wind lifted the envelope to the right. Two more ropes broke under the strain. It had a domino effect. One by one the 16 Kevlar fibre ropes parted under the pressure.

As the engineers raced for cover the majestic balloon, the product of ten years planning and design rocketed skywards like a cork out of a champagne bottle. It soared high over the Atlas Mountains while below on the ground the devastated members of the Virgin Challenger team broke down in tears. The 223 ft balloon, one and a half times the size of Nelson's Column, disappeared from view in 90 minutes.

Within an hour the wayward balloon had soared 25,000 ft into the air on a course for Algeria, which was the first country Mr Branson and his crew were to have crossed. Mr Kendrick telephoned Mr Branson, 47, who was preparing to leave his hotel to try to beat the world's

last great aviation challenge.

He said: "Richard, the project is off for a bit. The balloon has gone."

Mr Branson, who was with his wife, Joan, his son Sam, 12, and daughter, Holly, 16, thought it was a joke. He said: "I thought Mike was pulling my leg. I looked out of the hotel window and saw it was not a joke."

"I saw the balloon drifting away. I suspected straight away this was the end. The balloon had decided to make a run for it without us."

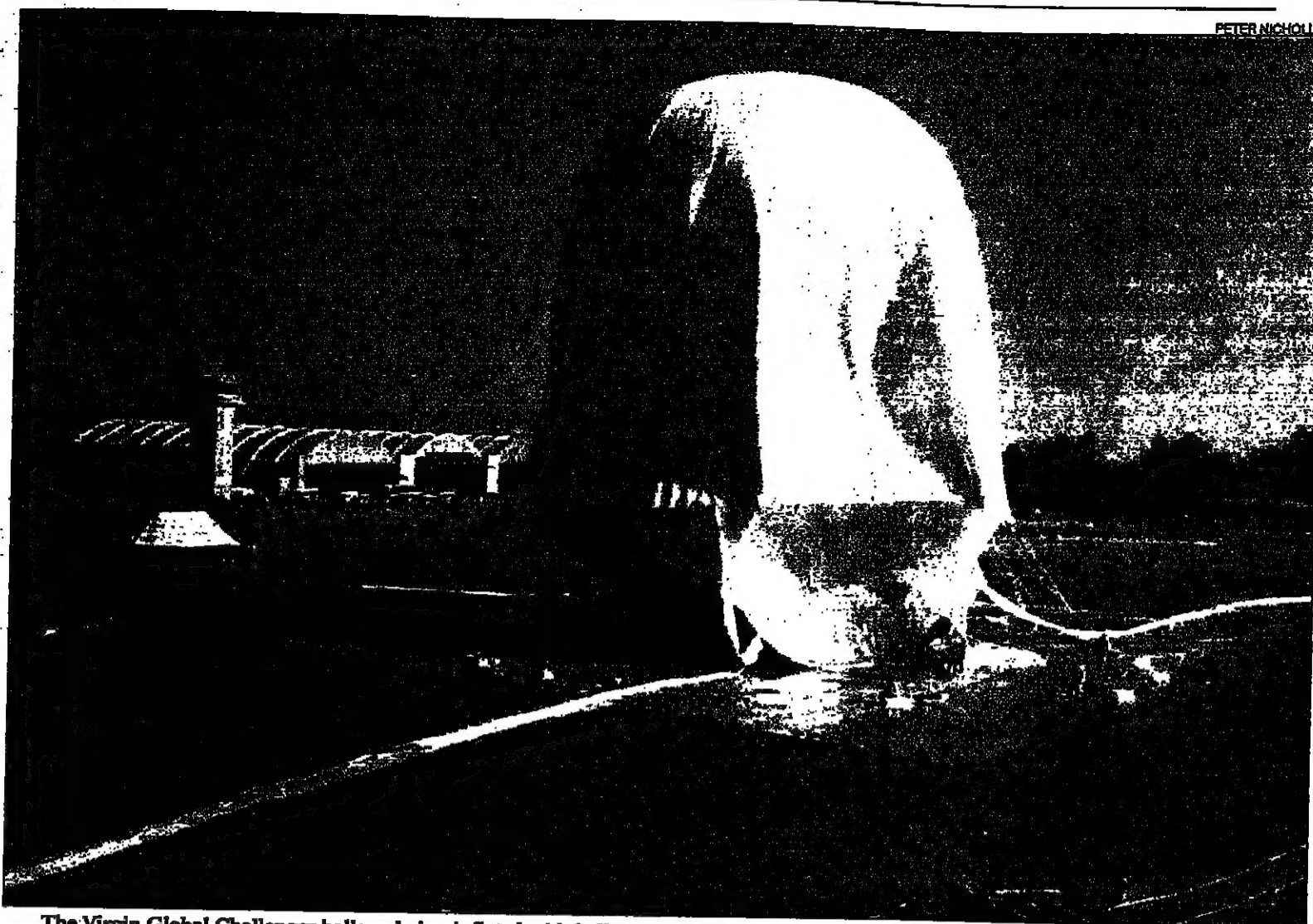
"It is an horrendous disappointment. The conditions had been perfect. But the balloon doesn't like being on the ground. One of the most dangerous times is during the inflation. We have to look on the bright side. Maybe fate has been kind to us. If we had taken off it could have been disastrous."

Moroccan air force jets based at the launch site by the imperial city of Marrakesh were put on alert. Air traffic controllers were warned that the balloon was floating out of control. The giant envelope represented the equivalent of four 747 airplanes on Moroccan radar screens.

The launch had been scheduled to take place at 4pm but the unscheduled take off happened at 11am in blazing sunshine as crowds of Moroccan gathered to witness the spectacular launch.

For Lindstrand, 47, the pilot who designed and built the multi-million pound craft, was working in the one tonne capsule at the time. "I saw what I thought was a toy silver balloon drifting past the window. It looked horribly familiar. My stomach churned. I realised it was ours. We had taken a big gamble by inflating in the day. It was a gamble we lost."

They had hoped to inflate the balloon last night for a take-off at dawn today but the weathermen warned them that the jet streams, which were required to power the balloon were in danger of dying away. They decided to inflate yesterday morning. It was a fatal miscalculation. The thermic winds, which had been expected to be no more than 5 knots an hour, reached 14 by mid morning. Within minutes



The Virgin Global Challenger balloon being inflated with helium shortly before it escaped when a gust of wind snapped the guy ropes

of the balloon breaking free they had died away. Mr Branson had been in favour of a night time inflation, but was overruled by the weathermen.

The Virgin chief arrived at the air force base hand in hand with his children and was initially too choked to speak. As he addressed the Virgin Challenger team he became emotional and was forced to break off his short speech. But he was clapped and cheered when he declared: "We have to be positive. We can try again."

They were hoping yesterday that they could retrieve the £250,000 envelope, carry out repair work and try again next week or in January. But the calculations will depend on whether any of the competitors successfully complete the 20,000 mile voyage, across 70 countries in 18 days.

Mr Branson said he was sure that the record would go this year. "Sadly, it looks like it won't be me who breaks the record. It's bitter. But we are alive to fight another day. We will start building another envelope straight away. We will go again if the other teams are not successful. We are sorry for everybody who has been involved in this project. But at least I will be home for

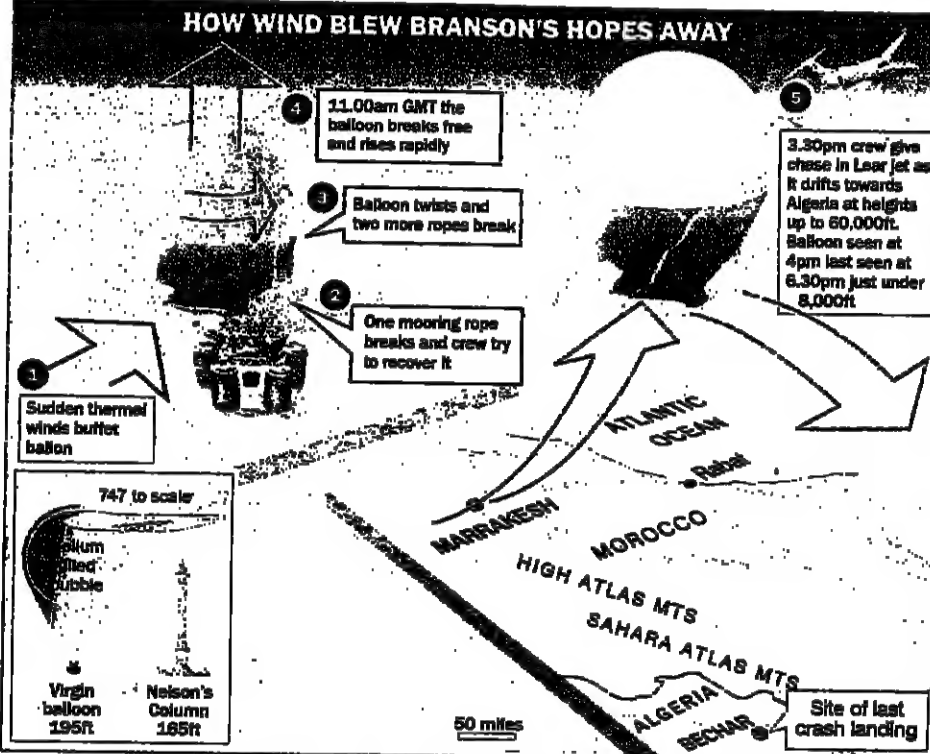
Christmas." Last January the Virgin Challenger had been flying for 19 hours when it ran into serious difficulties at night in Algeria when the helium, which was required to keep the balloon buoyant at night, cooled dramatically. The balloon crash-landed in the Algerian desert after only 23 hours having travelled only 400 miles.

Four other teams are now vying for the chance to become the first to float around the world, with two of them hoping to take off within a week.

Mr Branson's old friend and rival Bertrand Picard, a Swiss balloonist, is hoping to launch his second round the world bid next week, but it could be as long as late February depending on the wind conditions.

Three other balloonists are also hoping to claim the title. They are Kevin Ulissi, Steve Fossett and Dick Rutan.

Leading article, page 19



Lindstrand: "We took a big gamble and we lost"

## Star's son born with a rebel yell

By JOANNA BALE

MICK JAGGER'S newborn son will almost certainly be brought up an Englishman, but his third name, Beauregard, will always be a reminder of his mother's Southern roots.

The 8lb 3oz boy, named Gabriel Luke Beauregard Jagger, was born in London early yesterday. Although his first name has obvious seasonal connotations, his Texan-born mother, Jerry Hall, is said to have been keen for him to have a Southern name. Beauregard is popular in America's South because of the confederate general Pierre Beauregard, who designed the famous "rebel flag", the strongest symbol of the Southern cause in the American Civil War. He is also famous for being the man who fired the first shots in the conflict, by ordering the bombardment

of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbour in 1861.

Jagger, 54, who is on tour with the Rolling Stones in Atlanta, was not present at the birth. His spokesman, Fran Curtis, said that mother and baby were well and that Jagger "was clearly very excited". Jagger is expected home on Saturday.

He and Ms Hall, a model, have three other children: Elizabeth, 13, James, 11, and Georgia May, 5. Jagger also has two daughters, Karis and Jade, from previous relationships. He is grandfather to Jade's two children Assist, 4 and Amber, 2. Jagger and Ms Hall, 41, married in 1990 after living together since the 1970s. Earlier this year she reportedly consulted the divorce lawyer Anthony Julius after Jagger was linked to a model and an actress.

## Balloon chase

Continued from page 1

mountains towards Algeria, covering 120 miles in five hours. A convoy of Bedouin Arabs were also reported to be following the silver balloon, which took on the appearance of a huge pink jellyfish against the light of the sinking sun. A Virgin official said: "With one million cubic metres of fabric, it would create a lot of tents. It could build a whole Bedouin city."

A Moroccan military helicopter also joined in the chase but had to abandon the flight because it could only reach 14,000 ft as the balloon hovered imperiously above 40,000 ft.

Mr Branson remained on the ground, however, saying that to have joined the pursuit would have involved "the longest and loneliest flight of my life". Despite his disappointment, the millionaire adventurer remained determinedly optimistic. "We will do it again," he insisted. "Only the next time I plan to be in the balloon."

As the sky turned a deep red at sunset, the balloon began its precipitous fall. The Lear jets

passed within 400 ft and continued to follow it until it had fallen below 7,500 ft above the tiny Moroccan village of Timaho in rugged and unforgiving mountainous terrain.

At the same time, Virgin engineers were making their way to the nearest large town, Quarzazate, to prepare for an early morning salvage expedition. Will Whitehorn, a corporate affairs director, said: "It's vital we get to it before the sun rises and it goes up again. I'm confident we can do it without having to resort to shooting it down."

Timaho is only 50 miles from the spot where the Virgin copilot Alex Ritchie dumped a propane gas cylinder overboard after clambering on to the roof of the capsule shortly before it crash landed 23 hours into their flight last January. Mr Branson and his team then had to fly into Algeria to retrieve the Virgin balloon and capsule.

This time the balloon, which cost £250,000 to make, is insured for £100,000, but it was unclear last night whether the policy would pay out for damage inflicted by gunfire.

## Scientists enticed by rare jewel

By TERRI JUDY

A WOMAN who enjoys shopping for the unusual may have made a fortune after discovering a prehistoric fly trapped inside a £12 amber ring she bought at a fair. Biologists believe the insect is one of only eight members of its species recorded in amber worldwide.

Catherine White, 39, a divorced mother-of-two who is taking a six-year Open University science degree course, plans to sell the silver ring to help to finance her studies. She bought it while trawling hunting at a natural medicine fair, and wore it for six weeks before taking it to experts at the University of Leeds.

After learning that it may be 40 million years old, Ms White, from Conisley, West



The amber ring, and a close-up of the fly trapped in it

Yorkshire, said: "I thought it was old but I couldn't believe how old."

"It is quite spooky. If you hold the ring under a magnifying glass and shine a light on it, the fly's eye glows. You can even see its tiny head and hunch back."

David Blackley, a biologist at the university, is convinced that the fly is a member of the



Heleomyzidae family, but plans to send it to experts in London for confirmation. He said: "I think it is possibly 40 million years old."

"In the 15 years I've been carrying out research, I've never seen an insect caught in amber. It's certainly the most exciting thing I've ever had."

"This is a very rare fossil within a piece of jewellery.

Collectors would buy this as a fossil, not as a piece of jewellery. It's a piece you couldn't put a monetary price on. You can see air bubbles near the wings which indicates that it was caught in the amber when it was alive. If someone was faking it, they would use a dead fly. In the scientific world it would be priceless. Let's just say it was £12 very well spent."

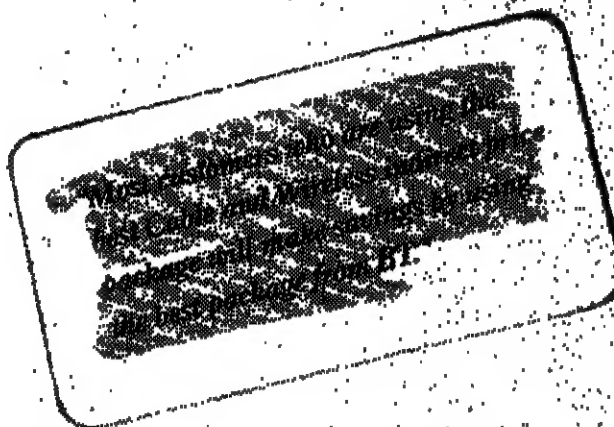
Andrew Ross, of the palaeontology department at the Natural History Museum, believes the amber may have come from a mine in Kalingrad. Most of the insect amber has Russian origins. He added that there were only seven examples of this particular fly species in Baltic amber recorded world wide. "If it is a Heleomyzid fly, then it will be very rare," he said.





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## Couple find runaway son living rough in London

By Simon de Bruxelles

THE bearded figure in Leicester Square looked like another down-and-out to Catherine Davies, after a 31-day search for her missing son. But as she took a closer look, there was something familiar about his football scarf and his eyes.

Then the tired faced looked back at her and said: "Mum." She reached out and hugged the 17-year-old, who had run away from home because of fears about his mock A levels. Yesterday, Alex Davies was back home with his family in Clevedon, Somerset, sleeping off his ordeal.

He vanished last month, taking a small bag and £100 from his bank account on the eve of a school parents' evening. He left behind a scribbled note saying: "I've let you down. Please forgive me." For two weeks, Mrs Davies, 46, an insurance manager, and her husband Gordon, 50, a marketing consultant, feared he might be dead, but then he made a withdrawal at a cashpoint machine in London.

In desperation, they made appeals on television and radio, placed advertisements in *The Big Issue* and travelled to London to search for him. They arranged for appeals to be broadcast at the White Hart Lane ground of Tottenham Hotspur, his favourite team. School friends distributed leaflets. On Sunday morning, his parents were on their

fifth visit to the capital. Mrs Davies said: "After an hour, I saw someone in front of us. It didn't look much like Alex or walk like him, but I decided to run after him just in case."

"When I caught up with him, I looked at this bearded face and it wasn't Alex's, but then I saw the Tottenham scarf and I recognised his eyes. He just said 'Mum'. We collapsed into each other's arms."

Alex had spent the month sleeping rough near Trafalgar Square, trying to keep out of trouble and spending his dwindling money on food. He said: "It was a massive relief when they found me."

He had been worried about his biology and geography mock A levels, which he was due to take after Christmas. "After walking out like that, I found it impossible to call home, but I knew my parents would check my bank withdrawals. I wanted them to find me. If I had seen one of their messages, I think I would have felt they were reaching out to me and I would have called them."

Mrs Davies, who has two other sons, Tim, 19, and Rowan, 13, said: "We will all enjoy a family Christmas and then Alex can take stock of what to do next. What I can't forget is that we left behind hundreds of others just like him, still living rough on the streets."



Anne Atkins hugs her 12-year-old daughter Lara, known as Bink, who was found by a family friend after wandering the streets for 36 hours

## Agony aunt's ecstasy at child's return

Girl who went in search of adventure found only cold and fear, reports Emma Wilkins

THE agony aunt whose 12-year-old daughter went missing from home for 36 hours spoke yesterday of her joy and relief after her child was found safe and well.

Anne Atkins and her husband Shaun, a Church of England vicar, hugged their daughter Lara and said they would not be rebuking her over her "adventure" which prompted a search costing more than £10,000.

Lara — known by her family nickname Bink — who is an avid reader of adventure stories, slept rough in a park in Hammersmith, southwest London, on Sunday night and was found wandering the streets

by a family friend after dark on Monday. Instead of having a "mad-cap" storybook adventure, Lara was left cold, damp and frightened by her experience.

Police who mobilised a helicopter, dog units and called up scores of reserve forces for the hunt, were anxious to dissuade other children from copying Lara. Although she was unharmed, the outcome could have been far more serious, officers said.

Mrs Atkins, who has written a weekly advice column in *The Daily Telegraph* for the past 12 months, said she planned to talk to her daughter about the worry she had caused. "It's

great she's safe and well. She was enormously relieved to be found. It was scary for her," said Mrs Atkins, hugging her daughter in the sitting room of the family home in Fulham, southwest London.

"There are better ways to have an adventure and we will be talking to her about it. We're just so pleased to have her home that we couldn't think of rebuking her. "We have a lot of talking and hugging to do — that's more important."

Mrs Atkins, who caused controversy when she complained about the Church of England's tolerance of homosexuality in a Radio 4 broadcast

last year, laughed as she said her daughter had slept somewhere near a tree. "It's a secret where she stayed on Sunday night. We know where it was. She told us that somewhere out there is a tree with 'Bink was here' on it."

Lara apologised for the trouble she had caused and thanked police and press for helping to find her. She read out a note saying: "I'm very sorry that I caused everybody so much worry and expense. I didn't realise there would be so much hassle about it or that everyone would be so worried."

Mrs Atkins and her husband have three other children: Serena, 14, Alexander, 11, and Ben, 9.

## Parents win right to exclude boy from their home

By Kathryn Knight

A COUPLE have resorted to legal action to ban their bullying son from the family home. Robert and Margaret Foraker felt so intimidated by their 19-year-old son, Robert, that they were granted a restraining order to keep him away from their cottage in Tuddenhall, St Mary, Suffolk.

Their application for the order followed weeks of bullying by their 6ft son, who on Monday was convicted of eight counts of harassment against his parents and was remanded in custody by magistrates in Mildenhall.

"There is no question that they have felt intimidated and threatened by their son," John Fenn, for the prosecution, told the court. He said that Foraker was arrested at home on November 12 after a violent outburst in which he had broken a lavatory and shattered a window.

The family had moved to the village about four years ago when Mr Foraker, an American, started work as an administrative officer at the United States Air Force base at Mildenhall.

George Peacock, for the defence, said that Foraker would respect the restraining order because he realised that he could not co-exist in the same house as his parents. He said: "This is really a story about a young man who is frustrated with life and begins arguing at home. Quite clearly it has gone beyond the bounds of a normal argument."

Foraker, who admitted harassment, was remanded in custody until December 22 after magistrates were told that he had breached previous court orders, including a conditional discharge connected with an assault on his father.

Yesterday Mr Foraker said he had not wanted to see his son jailed but had been left with little option. "We do not want sympathy. We want medical help for our son. What he has done is wrong, but I do not want him in jail any more than I would any one else's son," he said.



Reunited: Alex Davies with his parents yesterday

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# Warning of riots unless police improve attitude to Asians

BY RICHARD FORD  
HOME CORRESPONDENT

POLICE are risking a return of race riots because mistakes made with the black community are being repeated with a new generation of young Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, a Home Office report said yesterday.

Suspicion and hostility between police and the Afro-Caribbean groups is said to be spreading to ethnic minorities from the Asian sub-continent, and action is needed to stop this becoming entrenched. The report said that the danger of a repeat of disturbances that broke out in major cities in 1981 was already apparent, and that initiatives would be needed to prevent relations worsening.

The same problems that have become so deeply entrenched in police relations with black people are beginning to set in also with young Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in particular, said the Home Office study on ethnic monitoring in police forces in England and Wales. The report found that within the police, collective views of Asians had changed, and that the community was no longer seen as a relatively "unproblematic" group.

The report gives a list of problems: "The Rushdie affair and other local political developments, particular problems investigating intracommunity crime, the events in Bradford 1995 [street disturbances], the growth of vigilantism, the accumulating experience of aggressive behaviour and hostility toward the police among younger Asians and perceptions of their increasing involvement in crime, pointed to the development of new, and more negative views of Asians."

In one of four areas, officers were becoming more aware of groups of young Asians "hanging around", apparently "up to no good". In stop-and-search figures, the Metropolitan Police gave a ratio of 2.5 ethnic minority stops for each white person stopped. When looked at more closely, the figure was 4.4 stops for blacks and 1.2 stops for Asians. In Leicestershire, figures suggesting parity in stop-and-searches between blacks and whites masked a search rate for black people that was more than five times the rate for whites.

The report also found that collective memories among the police of the inner-city riots were reinforced by officers' experiences and perceptions of black hostility towards police. One chief inspector told the researchers that a spiral had set in of "mutual suspicion, aggression and hostility which it will be difficult to break".

Although the study said it would be unwarranted to accuse all police officers of having general views of ethnic-minority groups, it found hostility to the whole concept of ethnic monitoring within the service. Some police considered it irrelevant, and others were resentful or feared it was a "stick" designed to beat them with. Although research had shown that black people were over-represented in criminal justice figures relative to their presence in the population, the report said that did not prove large-scale police discrimination. However, it said that the figures could be used to reinforce an assumption about black criminality that appeared to be widespread among officers.

## Butchers call on Cunningham to cancel beef ban

Black market in T-bone steaks and oxtail is bound to flourish under the counter, reports Michael Hornsby

BUTCHERS yesterday launched a nationwide appeal to their customers to sign a petition urging the Government to abandon its proposed ban on beef on the bone. They want at least for it to be postponed until after Christmas.

At the same time, local authority officials predicted a flourishing black market in bone-in beef: they believe it will be virtually impossible to stop the most sought-after cuts being sold under the counter. The ban, announced by Jack Cunningham, the Minister of Agriculture, on December 3, is due to come into force next Tuesday. Unless amended, it will outlaw such cuts as rib of beef, T-bone steak and oxtail. Anyone caught selling such items will be guilty of an

offence punishable in a magistrates' court by a fine of up to £5,000 and/or up to six months in jail; or up to two years' jail and/or an unlimited fine in a Crown Court. Since Dr Cunningham's announcement, customers keen to fill their freezers before the ban takes effect have cleared butchers' shops of ribs of beef, always popular in the run-up to Christmas, and oxtails. Although beef on the bone accounts for no more than 5 per cent of total beef sales, independent butchers say that being able to supply such specialist cuts is one of the things that gives them an edge over supermarkets.

A letter detailing the terms of the ban has been sent to 400 organisations representing farmers, butchers, caterers, meat processors, consumers and other interested parties, who have until 4pm on Friday to comment. John Fuller, director of the National Federation of Meat and Food Traders, which represents 3,000 of Britain's 10,000 independent butchers, said: "Our customers are strongly behind us. We are confident of being able to show massive opposition to the ban by the deadline."

All the federation's members were yesterday sent a poster for display in their shop windows. It reads "Wanted: Beef on the Bone. Protect Your Right To Choose" and invites shoppers to sign a petition objecting to the ban. David Statham, food committee chairman of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, said: "As we understand it, butchers will still be able to have beef hanging on the bone in their shops. An offence will only be committed if beef is actually sold to a customer on the bone. Unless an inspector is present to witness such a transaction, it is difficult to see how an offence could be proved."

Dr Cunningham took his decision after receiving the results of new research by the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), the scientific body set up to advise the Government. This

showed evidence of BSE ("mad cow" disease) infectivity in dorsal root ganglia, nervous tissue in the bones of the spinal column of cattle which is left with the bone when meat is cut off the spine. Tests also found "provisional" evidence that bone marrow might harbour the BSE agent. However, the chance that anyone eating beef on the bone would contract BSE is roughly one in a billion.

Sandy Mole, the President of the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, resigned last night in the face of mounting criticism from members over his handling of the beef crisis. Mr Mole, who was elected president in 1996 just days before the first problems hit the industry, said his presidency had "become untenable and unsustainable." He was given an icy reception when he addressed farmers blockading the ports of Stranraer and Cairnryan to prevent Irish beef imports at the weekend.

Boycott ruling, page 14



Farmers took their tractors on to the A30 on the border between Devon and Cornwall yesterday in a go-slow protest at the policy on beef

## Adverts censured

THE Vegetarian Society has been censured over three "distressing" advertisements in which it suggested that eating red meat had a direct link to cancer (Carol Midgley writes).

The Advertising Standards Authority upheld complaints from the Meat and Livestock Commission, the Danish Bacon and Meat Council and the National Farmers' Union

that the series of newspaper advertisements were "shocking and offensive" and exaggerated the link to cancer. It suggested that a causal relationship was universally accepted.

One of the adverts asserted that one in three people was affected by cancer, and eating a vegetarian diet reduced the risk of developing it by 40 per cent.

Pub defies 'bone police'

By PAUL WILKINSON

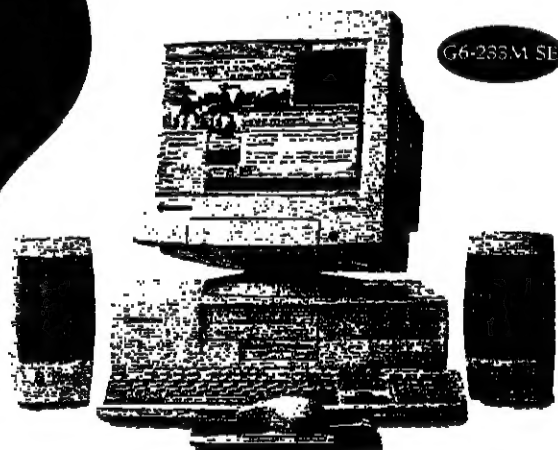
A PUBLICAN in a farming community is to defy what he calls the Government's "bone marrow police" by serving a beef-on-the-bone menu two days after the cuts are banned.

Lee Chadwick will offer marrowbone soup and a choice of roast ribs of beef on the bone, osso bucco, braised oxtail or T-bone steak. The

cuts are being outlawed as a precaution against possible contamination from BSE-infected cattle. Mr Chadwick said that locals at the Royal Oak in Dacre Banks, North Yorkshire, are already booking the £10 meal and that his 60-seat restaurant should be full a week on Friday. "People have had more than enough of self-seeking politicians and bureaucrats telling them what they can and cannot eat and drink, and in the process destroying livelihoods."

Mr Chadwick would face a maximum fine of £5,000, Gordon Gresty, head of the North Yorkshire trading standards department, said: "If he goes ahead, it would be illegal and we would then have to investigate the matter to consider what action to take."

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# Toyota's French choice will create British spin-off

By Ben Macintyre and Polly Newton

FRANCE'S long, intense and secret courtship of Toyota Motor Corporation led to the announcement that the Japanese car giant will build an assembly plant in the northern French city of Valenciennes.

Toyota plans to spend £400 million on the factory, the largest Japanese investment ever in France, creating 2,000 jobs by 2001 in a region with more than 20 per cent unemployment.

While the decision is a blow to British hopes for an extension of the Toyota plant at Burnaston, Derbyshire, Britain is likely to enjoy a substantial spin-off from the French plant. Engines are expected to be provided by the company's engine assembly factory at Deeside, which means more investment and jobs for North Wales. Some parts for the vehicle could also be produced in Britain.

In addition, Toyota will start production at Burnaston next year of the Corolla, its bestselling model around the world. By the end of the century, Burnaston will be able to turn out more than 200,000 cars a year. As a

result, there was disappointment but little bitterness among workers and local union officials at Toyota's choice.

Bob Higgins, regional secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, said: "The very reason the company can afford to invest in Europe is due to the efforts of the workers in Burnaston. I have been given assurances that there will be continued investment in the South Derbyshire plant, and that is good news."

Ken Jackson, the union's general secretary, attributed Toyota's choice to Gordon Brown's decision to keep Britain out of the single European currency for the lifetime of this Parliament.

He said: "The UK will continue to lose investment, jobs and skills until the Government decides to join."

Toyota denied that its choice had anything to do with Britain's position on the single currency.

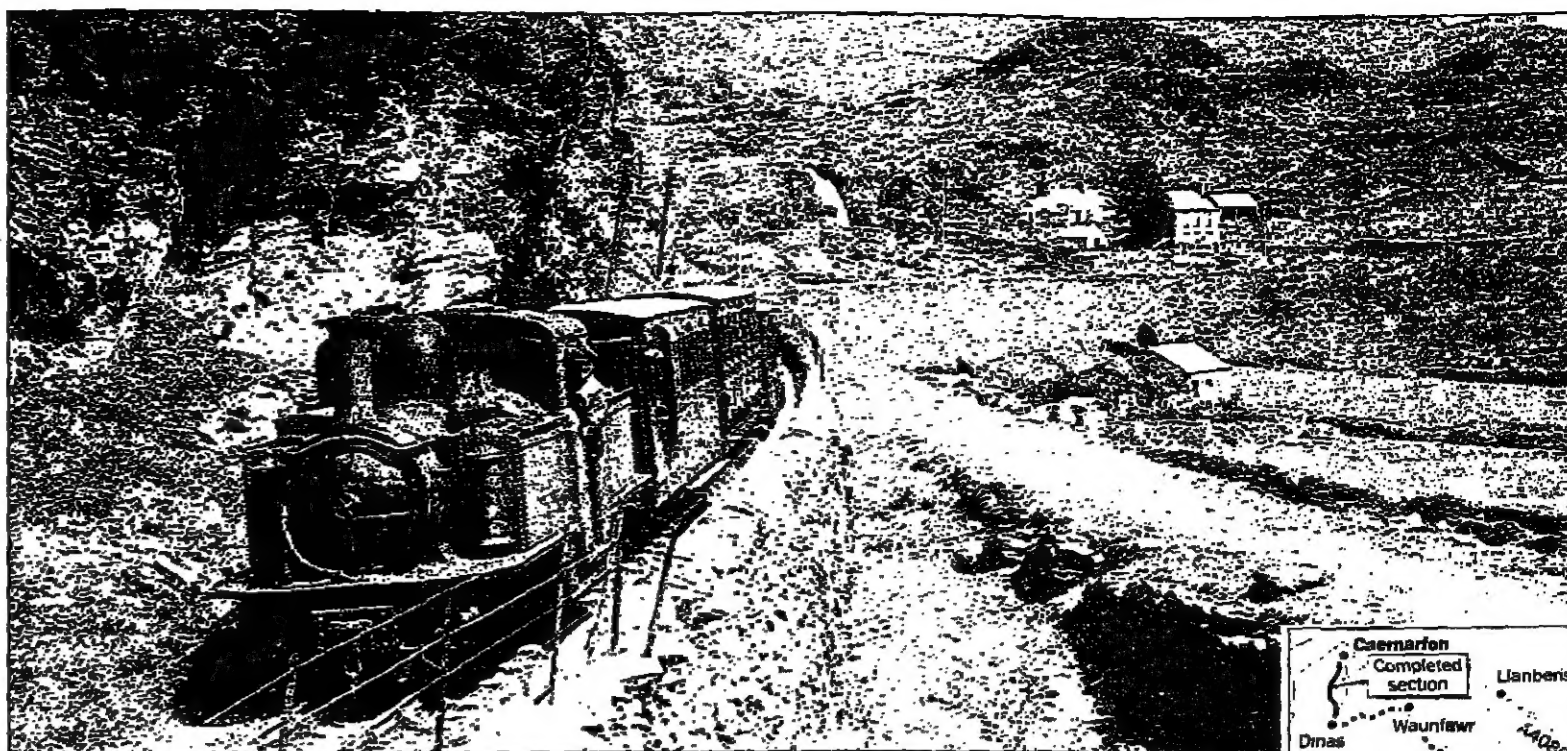
The Tories found other reasons to blame the Government. John Redwood, Shadow President of the Board of Trade, said the company's

decision proved that Labour was "bad for business" because interest rates and the strength of sterling were hitting exporters.

Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, rejected the claims from both men. She said that Toyota simply wanted to produce cars nearer to its target markets.

Some 70 sites competed for the new plant, which will eventually produce 150,000 vehicles a year. Reasons for choosing France included Toyota's determination to make inroads into its large car market, of which Toyota has less than 1 per cent.

The Japanese company was also attracted by France's position at the heart of the future "euro zone" and a highly trained workforce in a region specialising in car manufacture. France's subsidy is expected to be about 500 million francs (£50 million).



The Ffestiniog Toy Railway bound for Snowdonia in 1936. The line struggled and has been closed for 60 years

## Protest aims to derail Snowdon line

By Russell Jenkins

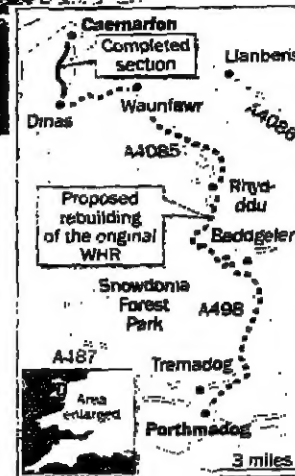
FARMERS, ramblers and environmentalists joined forces yesterday to try to derail the reopening of a steam railway through the heart of the Snowdonia National Park.

Plans by the Ffestiniog Railway Company to restore 14 miles of the old Welsh

Highland Railway line from Dinas, near Caernarfon, to Porthmadog have caused outrage among opponents who believe that the scheme would damage the landscape. The original railway opened in 1923 but won little business in the days before mass tourism and closed in 1937.

Yesterday enthusiasts faced their opponents across a packed council the-

atre in Caernarfon for the first day of a six-week public inquiry. Mike Hart, chairman of the Ffestiniog Railway Company, said that the project would bring international tourism to North Wales, create jobs and offer a real alternative to the car. However, opponents said the line would bring noise, pollution and visual blight.



## Hope of jobs in town left to rust

From Susan Bell in Valenciennes

JAPANESE flags fluttered alongside the Tricolour yesterday in the town square of Valenciennes, as France's north-eastern rust belt celebrated the deal. School children were presented with 2,000 specially printed T-shirts.

The region once had booming iron factories and a flourishing mining industry, but gradually the mines and factories closed, leaving skilled workers facing a bleak future. In 30 years, Valenciennes lost 40,000 jobs; more than one in five of the population is unemployed. In grim housing estates on the town's outskirts, the young have turned to

drugs and petty crime. At the local job centre, staff say they have been besieged during the past week with inquiries about possible employment with Toyota.

José De Castro, 54, laid off for two weeks, said: "The situation here is desperate, so this is a wonderful thing for our town, but we must also ask ourselves: will the French automobile industry suffer as a result? We are also afraid that the Japanese will bring in their own specialists rather than hiring local people."

Romard Kacioui, 25, who has never had a job, said: "Unemployment is at the root of all the problems we have here — drugs and delinquency. It's because there's nothing to do. The Toyota factory won't fix everything but it will surely help us."

Toyota's Japanese executives who move to Valenciennes will be able to enjoy regional attractions such as golf courses, and may even develop a taste for the local speciality of finely sliced smoked cow's tongue layered with foie gras and armagnac.

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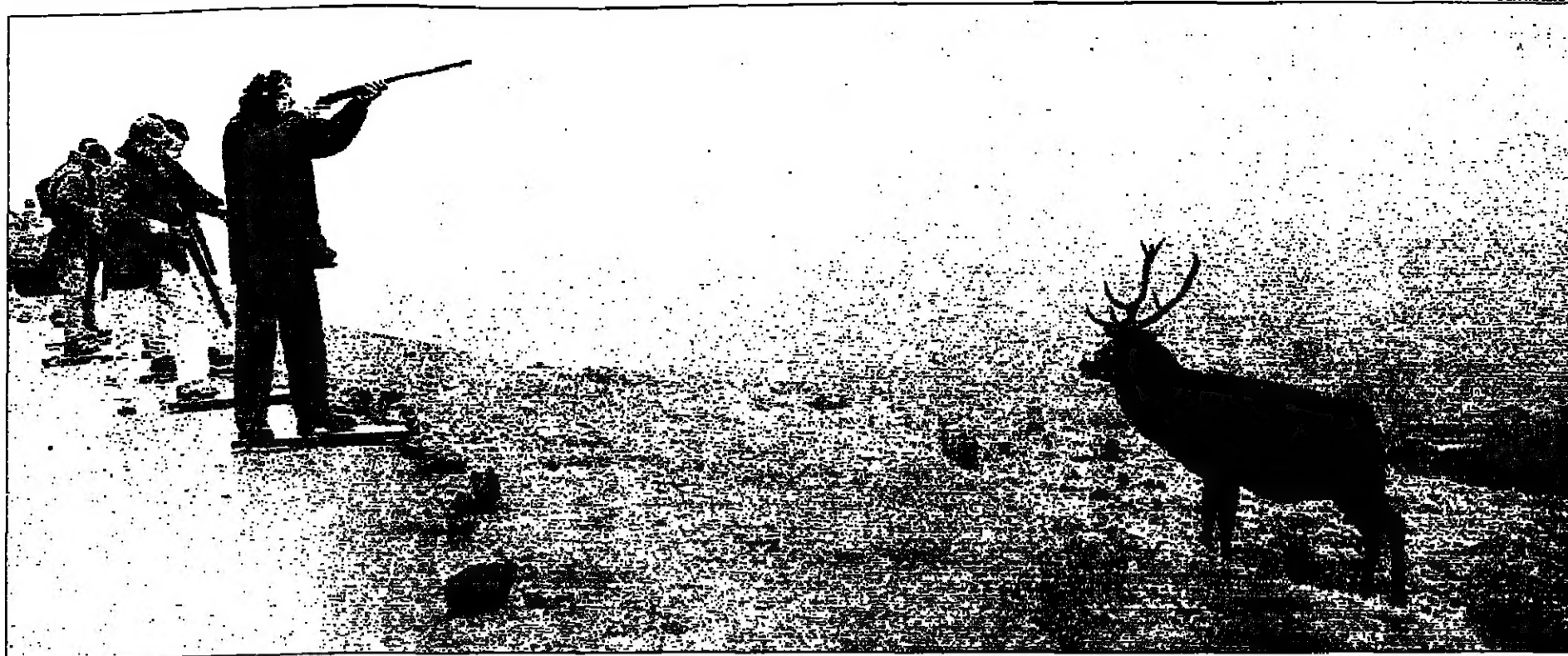
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A GROUP of clay-pigeon shooters in the Highlands were amazed when their party was joined by this red deer stag. The beast ambled out of the mist to watch 40 men blasting 12-bore shotguns over a heather moor in Sutherland, northwest of Inverness (Shirley English writes). Usually the sight of a gun or scent of a man, the stag's deadliest enemy,

## Shooters held at bay by bold stag

would be enough to send deer running for cover. But this mature specimen, with ten-point antlers, strolled towards the shooters, pausing occasionally to sniff the air or to graze on a tuft of heather. It did not

stop until it was within a few metres. Iain Mackay, a retired stalker for the Red Deer Commission who captured the moment on film, said: "I have never seen anything like it. I think some of the lads found it a wee

bit off-putting with the big beast standing staring at them. Normally deer would be off over the first hill at the sight of a gun, never mind the sound." He said the antlers showed that the stag was neither young and

inexperienced nor old and senile, and the way it pricked its ears at the gun blasts showed it was not deaf. Mr Mackay, from Tongue, Highland, said: "The only explanation is that he is a very easy-going fellow." Other stalkers suggested the beast knew the stag-shooting season ended on October 20 and will not restart until July 1.

## Retired detective apologises for missing murders

By PAUL WILKINSON

A RETIRED detective yesterday apologised to the families of three murdered schoolboys for suggesting they had died through solvent abuse.

Barry Stewart, then a detective chief superintendent with Northumbria Police, led the inquiry into the deaths of

David Grieff and David Hanson, both 15, and Thomas Kelly, 18, whose bodies were found partly burned in allotment sheds or derelict houses near their homes in Sunderland. Mr Kelly was found in November 1993, David Hanson in February 1994, and David Grieff three weeks later. Their parents were out-

raged when Mr Stewart suggested they had been playing with fire while sniffing glue. They also claimed that, had the first death been treated as murder from the start, the two other boys might not have been killed.

It was a year after the first murder before scientific examination showed that the boys

had been murdered. Last year Steven Grieveson was jailed for life for the murders.

The Police Complaints Authority yesterday published a report blaming the mistake on a lack of training and forensic evidence. Mr Stewart said: "I am sorry my comments in 1994 were not as balanced as hindsight has shown they

should have been. With the best intentions I inadvertently added to the family's grief. The pathology failed to reveal a cause of death and there was a degree of speculation. The parents believed the comments besmirched their children's names and hindsight says what I did was wrong."

Molly Meacher, who led the authority's inquiry, said that the results of tests after David Hanson's death were not available until after David Grieff's death which therefore "was not a result of any lack of diligence on the part of police". Alan Oliver, Northumbria's Assistant Chief Constable, apologised for "the lack of sensitivity towards the families".

## Times Christmas Appeal

### Helping captive wildlife regain their pride

FROM JOANNA BALE IN PORT ELIZABETH

RESTING in the shade of an acacia tree under a cloudless African sky, two magnificent lions yawn contentedly as they survey the acres of bush around them. It is a far cry from two years ago, when they were huddled in a tiny cage on the roof of a bar in Tenerife.

Rescued by the Born Free Foundation — one of the two charities nominated by The Times this year for its Christmas Appeal — they were flown to a South African game reserve earlier this year and released into a new six-acre enclosure on Monday.

The move coincides with the opening yesterday of a conservation and education centre at the Shamwari game reserve near Port Elizabeth to create awareness of how wildlife is cruelly treated in captivity.

The centre, jointly run with the Born Free Foundation, will also become an international sanctuary for African animals found in similar situations. Visitors

including local children, will be able to see the lions — a male named Raffi and a female called Anthea — who have made a remarkable recovery and overcome the behavioural problems associated with captivity, such as endless pacing up and down.

Will Travers, the chief executive of BFF, arrived at Shamwari on Sunday with his mother, the charity's founder, Virginia McKenna. He said: "Raffi and Anthea were the catalyst for this centre. It took us the best part of five years to get them out — and to have them here is wonderful."

Adrian Gardiner, owner of the reserve, who has spent seven years transforming 40,000 acres into a lush natural habitat for hundreds of animals, including elephant and rhino, added: "It is not only local people, but also children around the world who will be able to access Raffi and Anthea's story via the Internet."



Raffi and Anthea at Shamwari game reserve

## Born Free Appeal

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For details of membership, animal adoptions and projects, visit BFF's Web-site at: <http://www.ukoln.co.uk/bornfree>

## An allotted span for rare weed

By MICHAEL HORNSBY

ALLOTMENT holders on the Isle of Wight have become careful cultivators of one of the world's rarest weeds, treating it with as much care as they devote to their cabbages and runner beans. The half-acre site at Lake is thought to be the only remaining home in Britain of Martin's rampion (*Fumaria reuteri*).

Eight allotment holders are co-operating with English Nature in studying the site to discover why it provides such a good habitat for the pink-flowered plant.

A survey by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust found hundreds of the weeds at the site, Patrick Cloughley, of the trust, said: "There is only one other known site in Britain, in west Cornwall, but the plant has not been seen there recently. Outside Britain it exists only at a few sites in France, Spain and Portugal."

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# Anger at US plan for pollution deal with Russia

FROM NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT, IN KYOTO

AN INTERNATIONAL rescue fund to help to save small island nations from rising sea levels was expected to be approved last night as America offered to back "real reductions" in greenhouse gases.

But the United States' strategy angered environmentalists and officials from several nations, who claimed that the proposals would do little to prevent global warming.

Under the plan, the United States would set up a carbon trading block with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, significantly, Russia.

Stuart Eizenstat, the US Under-Secretary of State for economic, business and agricultural affairs, said that there had been rumours that the US was ready to offer only a 2 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases, principally carbon dioxide, between 2008 and 2012.

But he said that figure underestimated the US proposal: "We are working on a new approach of trading within an umbrella of countries."

American sources said the United States had offered to make a 5 per cent reduction. But the US plan, described by one green group as a "fiddle" and the worst of all possible scenarios, will allow America to offset its rising carbon dioxide pollution by "buying in", at cheap prices, the huge emission reductions which have occurred since 1990 in Russia since the collapse of its heavy polluting industries. Carbon dioxide emissions in



Eizenstat working on a new approach of trading

Russia have fallen by nearly 30 per cent during the past five to seven years and will equate to some 3.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide available to be traded by 2000.

John Gummer, the former Environment Minister and a member of the British delegation, said: "This will allow America to do less by buying from Russia emissions that Russia would never have emitted anyway."

"America is treating this as a trade negotiation over the price of beans instead of a last-ditch discussion to protect the planet. They are horse trading. I wish this was just about horses but it is about whether some countries disappear under the waves, or areas such as Bangladesh, or even the sea coast of my constituency in

Suffolk, are flooded forever," he added.

British officials were treating the American proposal with caution and said that there needed to be a limit on the level of US pollution that could be offset by Russia's carbon credits.

Mr Eizenstat said that a significant reduction in US emissions depended on America securing a package of measures. These included the International Conference on Climate Control approving the idea of carbon sinks — forests that soak up carbon dioxide and which some nations want to be counted against their domestic emissions. Other measures the US wants include making the deal involve six greenhouse gases rather than the three proposed by the European Union.

Last night the delegates in Kyoto were also struggling to agree another proposal that would set differing greenhouse gas reductions for industrialised nations. European Union members would have a net target of an 8 per cent reduction, America's would be 5 per cent and Japan's would be just 4.5 per cent. John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, said that this deal would be hard for Britain to accept.

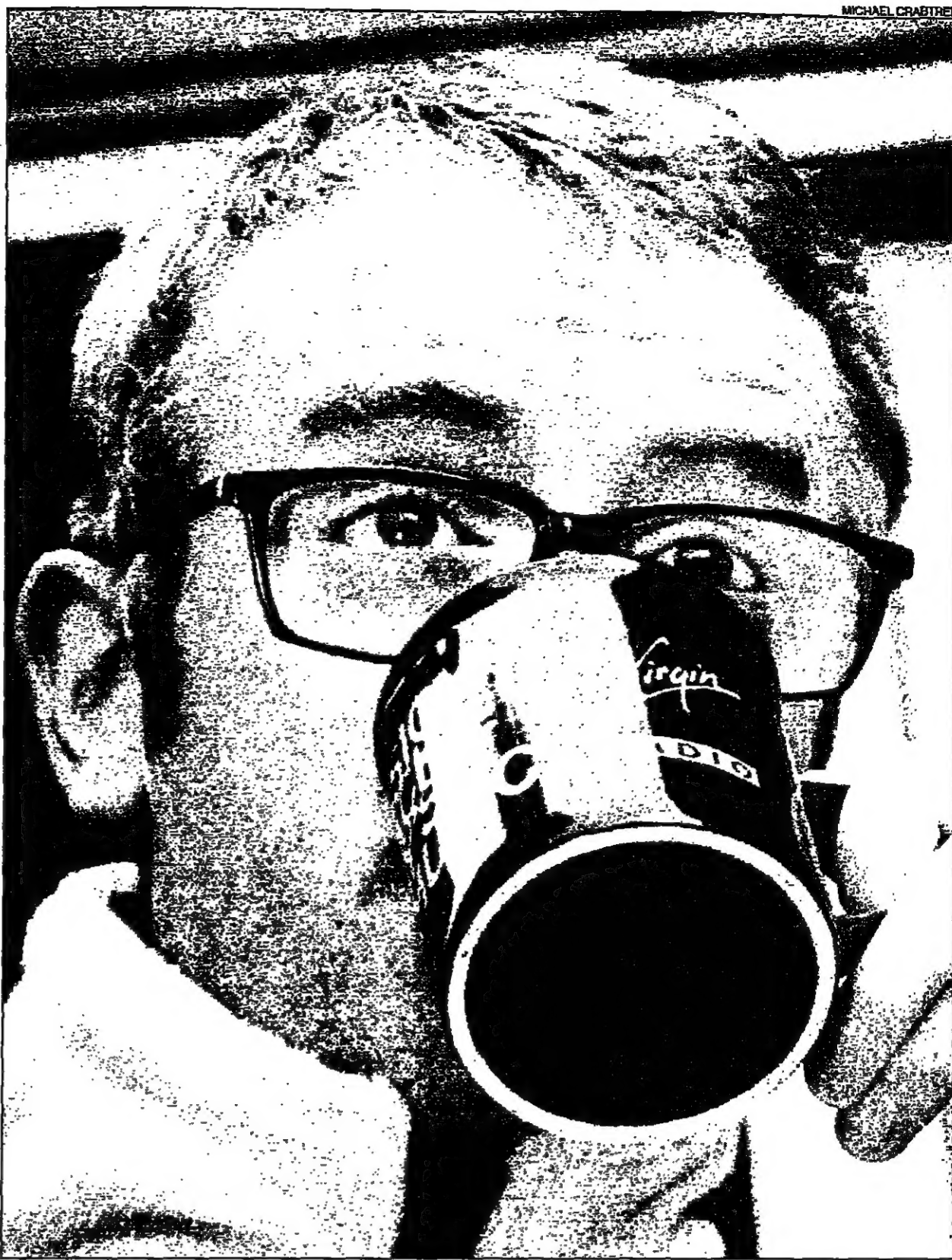
At least one significant area of agreement was set to be endorsed in the guise of a rescue package for nations vulnerable to global warming. The scheme, called the Clean Development Mechanism, will help countries facing the worst impacts, such as low-lying islands and coral atolls, carry out so-called adaptation projects.

John Ashe, the United Nations Ambassador for Antigua and Barbuda and a leading delegate with the G77 group of developing nations, said yesterday: "Such schemes include re-zoning beaches, building sea walls or moving buildings and infrastructure back into the interior."

The scheme is being heralded as an important deal maker as it brings the developed and developing worlds closer together.

The rescue plan will be funded by fees paid by rich nations. The United States, with support from scores of countries, is keen to offset its carbon gas emissions by carrying out clean energy and tree-planting projects in the Third World.

These projects, known as joint implementation, are deemed to be a cheaper way of curbing greenhouse gases in the developed world.



Chris Evans, Virgin Radio's new proprietor, taking tea and reporters' questions at the station yesterday morning

## Evans happy to take a pay cut to make his dream come true

BY CAROL MIDDLEY  
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

CHRIS EVANS says he is "skint" after paying £80 million to take over Virgin Radio. During his breakfast show yesterday, the radio and television presenter made repeated references to his penniless status. "Cashpoints are a thing of the past," he said. "I haven't got any money."

Mr Evans was taken on by Richard Branson for £200,000 over ten weeks, which he donated to the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. Yesterday he said he would now be taking an 80 per cent pay cut and awarding himself £4,000 a week. "I had to reduce my fees to allow the bottom line of the company to grow." Among the records played yesterday on his three-hour show was *The*

*Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)* by the Fun Boy Three.

Staff arriving for work at the station's London headquarters with hangovers from a celebration party the night before looked relieved about the takeover. Many had feared redundancies if the station had been bought by Capital, as had looked likely. Mr Evans arrived grinning minutes before his show started at 7am and declared that owning a radio station was a dream come true.

He put up £2 million in cash and his stake in his Ginger Productions Company, valued at £30 million, to buy Virgin Radio. The rest of the money came from Apex Partners, the investment group, and French bankers Paribas.

Yesterday he said: "The most important thing is that I will continue to do

what I do — giving ideas and producing the programmes." Asked if he would have to tone down his irreverent behaviour in view of his new responsibilities, Mr Evans said: "I can't go corporate, although we have gone corporate from a business point of view, but I can do what I want." He said there was a massive lack of on-air talent on television and radio and it was his ambition to nurture new talent. "It's up to me while I'm still young enough, because when I am 40 I won't know who the 'in' people are either."

Mr Evans told listeners: "We're not working for Richard Branson any more, but he's going to be looking after us. He will be giving us all his wisdom. He is like our Uncle Richard and if we have any problems we are going to see him."

### NEWS IN BRIEF

## Oyston's rape plea rejected by judges

The businessman Owen Oyston, 64, lost his appeal against convictions and a six-year prison sentence for the rape and indecent assault of a teenage model.

His lawyers said that he would seek remedy at the European Court of Justice. Oyston was ordered to pay prosecution costs estimated at £100,000, as well as his own. He had claimed that the girl was not the innocent described during the trial, and that there was new evidence, including an affair she had had in Crete. Lord Justice Phillips said: "The brief relationship with a young man is of no relevance to the question of whether she was raped."

### Seconds away

PC David Alcock, 37, who was sexually discriminated against in an assault course test to become a dog handler — he was within 14 seconds of the limit set for women officers but 46 seconds outside that for men — has accepted an undisclosed sum from Hampshire police.

### Zero tolerance

The head of a crime prevention panel in Middlesbrough has resigned in protest at the suspension of Ray Mallon, the town's head of CID who backs "zero tolerance". Dorothy Sewell, who has served on the panel for 15 years, has begun a petition for his reinstatement.

### Pallbearer dies

An elderly pallbearer collapsed and died after trying to lift a coffin trolley into the back of a hearse. Colleagues failed in their attempts to revive Austin Willcocks, 76, a lay preacher and former postman who worked for a firm of funeral directors in Culmington, Devon.

### Singer arrested

Shane MacGowan, the singer, was arrested after allegedly throwing a microphone stand into the crowd at a concert at Liverpool University. Mr MacGowan, formerly with The Pogues, was not charged and has been released on police bail pending further inquiries.

### Bank's red mist

A customer with a £300 overdraft limit received a bank letter warning him that he was more than £50 million in debt and had ten days to pay. Matthew Williams, 23, an assistant pub manager from Llanishen, Cardiff, was £200 overdrawn. Barclays has apologised for the error.

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# Tories will vote with Labour to boost rebellion

By Jill Sherman, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Tories have decided to vote with the Government over its plans to cut single-parent benefit in the hope of maximising a Labour rebellion tonight.

William Hague announced yesterday that his party would support Tony Blair, as the number of Labour backbenchers who say they will vote against the Government continued to grow.

Last week the Tories said that they would abstain on the issue but party strategists privately admitted that the new tactic to vote with the Government would encourage more MPs to rebel. "Ken Livingstone and his friends would never be seen going into the same division lobby as us," one Tory MP said.

Mr Hague said his party would back the Government because the Tories had introduced the cuts. "I'm not afraid to go into the same lobby as the Government, of saying: if you want to adopt the same policies we were having, we

will vote with you on principle and honesty."

Yesterday about a dozen Labour MPs made clear that they would vote against the Government's decision to cut single-parent benefit by £5 a week. But backbenchers claimed that at least 20 MPs would vote against the Government and between 25 and 30 more would abstain.

The whips suspect that many of these will peel off when they realise that the Government has no intention of making any concession on the benefit measure. They also hope to hide many of the abstentions by agreeing that the 30 MPs who will be away from the Commons will not be recalled. Other MPs are said to be away on secret committee trips.

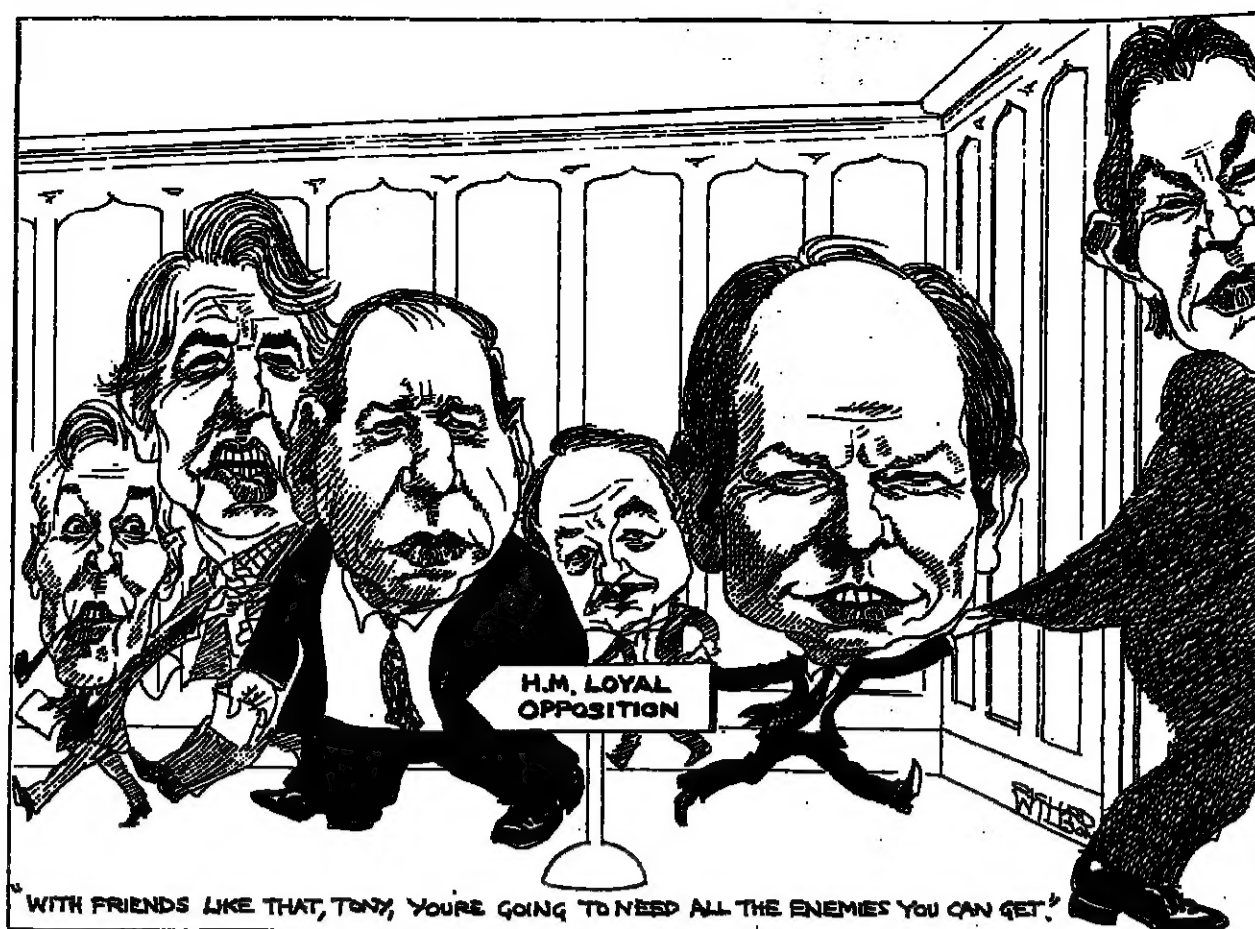
But some of the abstaining rebels insisted that they would turn up in the Commons and "put their hands" to show their dissent.

Labour whips were frantically trying to persuade poten-

tial rebels to fall into line, but they admitted that those who had opposed the cuts on radio or television had pushed themselves into a corner and they were unlikely to change their mind. They maintained that Nick Brown, the Chief Whip, would suspend any MP who voted against the three-line whip, and possibly those who abstained.

It is against the Labour Party's new disciplinary code to vote against the Government. Mr Brown will make a decision on disciplinary action this afternoon, but party sources insisted that the size of the revolt would not influence him.

The left-winger Tony Benn disclosed yesterday that he will vote against a Labour Government for the first time in 50 years. Last time he defied the whip was in 1947 when he voted against a measure to call up for the Korean war reservists who had served in the Army. Yesterday Mr Benn said: "I cannot in all con-



science vote to cut the income of the poorest people."

Other Labour MPs likely to join him in voting against the Government include Brian Sedgmore, Dennis Skinner, Llew Smith, Ronnie Campbell, Dennis Canavan, Audrey Wise and Lynne Jones, John Marek, Ken Livingstone and Maria Fyfe.

Labour whips are hoping to avoid any resignations by ministerial aides, but insist that if any defy the Government they will be sacked.

MPs will also vote tonight on an amendment which radically reduces the time that people can backdate benefit claims. Last year the Tories announced that they intended

to reduce backdating from 12 months to three months, but Labour has gone further and wants it reduced to one month. Some Labour MPs are also expected to rebel on this issue.

Earlier yesterday Mr Hague tried to whip up Labour dissent by accusing Mr Blair of exerting excessive control over his MPs.

Labour's discipline made it easier to get good headlines from time to time, Mr Hague said. "But I don't envy it in the long term because I think he's creating a lot of mindless robots in the Labour Party. There are some Labour MPs sitting in the House of Commons who aren't saying anything."

## Shredding files to be a criminal offence

By Valerie Elliott, Whitehall Editor

MINISTERS and civil servants could face jail or a substantial fine if they destroy government material requested for release under new Freedom of Information laws.

The proposal is included in tomorrow's Government White Paper on Freedom of Information and represents a significant victory for Dr David Clark, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is determined that any law should be radical and have "teeth".

The White Paper says that all papers should be released unless there are compelling public interest reasons to withhold information. Only papers relating to the security services and legal proceedings would remain exempt from disclosure requirements. In other areas, departments would be required to disclose the facts and analysis behind decisions.

The paper also proposes the appointment of an independent Information Commissioner, with the power to order the opening of Whitehall files. Ministers believe this measure would ensure public confidence in the new laws.

Members of the public will have direct access to the Commissioner and will not have to go through a laborious route through Parliament. The present role of the Parliamentary Ombudsman in adjudicating disputes between departments and members of the public is considered too complex. Inquiries take many weeks — and some over two years — to be resolved.

It is possible that the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Michael Buckley, could be given new powers and more resources to take on requests under Freedom of Information. At present members of the public must refer a complaint through an MP but one option might be to allow individuals direct access to him. Last year only 2,000 requests for information were made under the government's code of access to information.

## Women MPs reveal sexism of men about the House

Polly Newton reports on accusations of crude and repulsive suggestions and gestures



Griffiths: the culprits all look the same to her

WOMEN MPs run a gauntlet of sexist comments and gestures at Westminster, according to a television programme to be broadcast next month. Chief culprits, women on both sides of the House say, are the Tories.

One of the most startling allegations concerns two Conservative MPs who regularly "put their hands out in front of them as if they are weighing melons" when women are speaking in the chamber.

Jane Griffiths, new Labour MP for Reading East, tells the *Westminster Women* programme that she does not know who the culprits are "because they all look the same to me". Ms Griffiths also describes being inter-

rupted by mocking laughter when she first spoke in the Commons.

"There are things you half hear and you're not sure if you heard it right, and they use gesture and body language which gets missed by the cameras so they can't be caught at it. They do it on purpose. It's to put us off our stride. It's just another tactic in the battle and they will use anything, and men have always done that when they feel threatened by women."

Ms Griffiths said yesterday that younger Tory MPs seemed more likely than their older colleagues to behave in a sexist way. "If there is anything about health, whenever you mention breasts or pregnancy, they

giggle. They can't help it... it must be the public school they went to."

Emma Nicholson, who defected from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats during the last Parliament, says that her former Tory colleagues used to make "some of the most crude and repulsive suggestions" about women on the opposite benches. She often left the chamber rather than tolerate it. "I've never heard phraseology like it."

Other women MPs believe they have no particular cause for complaint. Gwyneth Dunwoody, the long-serving Labour MP for Crewe and Nantwich, says of her male colleagues: "They are vicious to one another so you shouldn't be a woman

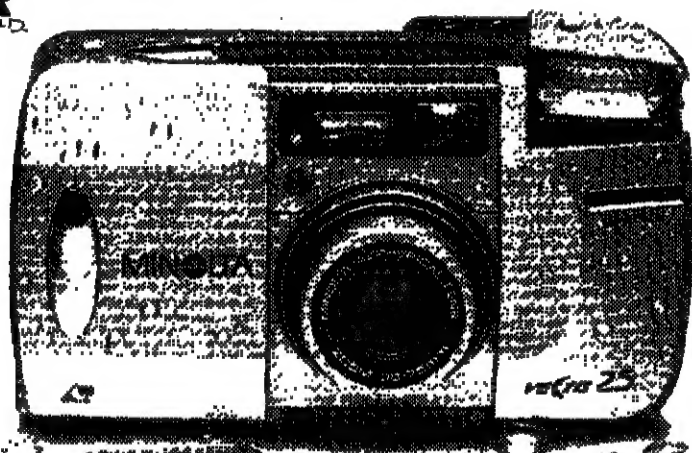
politician if you can't deal with it." And Maria Eagle, the new Labour MP for Liverpool Garston, says she will give as good as she gets. "When it gets really offensive, I think it can be shocking but I wouldn't take it without responding in kind."

In a rare interview, the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, responds to the suggestion that she was harsher on new women MPs after the general election than on the men. She says: "It is to be regretted if they feel that because it really isn't the case. I feel for them very much."

Westminster Women, an LWT production, begins on January 4 at 1.10pm on ITV.



Eagle: promises to give as good as she gets



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مكتبة الأمل



# Dobson heralds end to internal market

GP-led local commissioning groups will be central to the revamped health service, Ian Murray reports

THE radical ten-year programme for the National Health Service set out by the Government yesterday offers no extra money, a capped budget, and improvements funded largely by cutting £1 billion of red tape.

The White Paper is intended to shape the NHS for the second half-century of its life, with many of the reforms introduced by the Conservatives in the past seven years being dismantled. The competitive internal market is to be replaced with an integrated approach, Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, told MPs yesterday. GP-led local commissioning groups will be set up, responsible for implementing a three-year health improvement programme to meet the needs of each area.

The White Paper foreshadows the involvement of local authorities, responsible for funding community care, in drawing up these health improvement programmes. These will include drives for better housing, education and employment opportunities to help reduce poverty.

The existing fundholding scheme, which about 55 per cent of all GPs have joined, is to be ended in April 1999. Pilot schemes for a system of primary care commissioning groups are to start next April. Funds for the revamped health service will be capped, with money shared among the health authorities, taking account of differing needs.

The reduced number of health authorities will be in charge of allocating their

## THE MAIN POINTS

- Abolition of the internal market and GP fundholding introduced by the Tories in 1990
- GPs and community nurses to have control of buying most hospital and community care
- Faster and more dependable information for patients, including a 24-hour helpline, an NHS information superhighway
- A guarantee of specialist care for cancer patients within two weeks
- Reducing red tape and bureaucracy by £1 billion over the next five years
- A new NHS Charter to rebuild public confidence

funds to each of the primary care groups, comprising GPs and community nurses, in their areas. The authorities will be responsible for overseeing the effectiveness of the NHS in their area and will be able to hold the primary care groups to account if things go wrong. Special teams can go in to sort things out if budgets and care fall below standard.

The primary care groups will cover an area of 100,000 patients, and will be responsible for commissioning services for their community, working with social services. They will control a single, unified, capped budget and will be able to spend that money according to local need.

Four types of primary care groups will be set up initially. At the lowest level will be some

that act in support, advising the health authority in commissioning care for their population. Groups ready to take responsibility for managing the budget will work as part of the health authority. At a higher level of responsibility, groups can become established as free-standing bodies accountable to the health authority for commissioning care. The Government expects all groups ultimately to reach this level. At the highest level, these free-standing groups will be responsible for both health and community services in their area.

Hospital trusts will be party to the local health improvement programme. They will agree long-term service agreements with the primary care groups. These agreements, of a minimum of three years, will be for the provision of care for different sections of the community such as the elderly, heart patients or children.

To ensure quality there will be two new national bodies. One will help ensure consistent access to services and quality of care throughout the country. The other will be an institute for clinical excellence.

Locally, quality is to be monitored by a commission for health improvement which will support the clinical services, and tackle shortcomings by invitation or if the Health Secretary is advised that the local group is underperforming or considers a problem has not been tackled. Standards will be laid down in long-term agreements that will replace the present annual contracts. There will be a system of clinical governance in trusts and primary care groups to ensure that standards are met, backed by a statutory duty for quality in hospitals.

A league table of cost efficiency is to be introduced. For the first time each medical procedure and operation is to be given a clear definition so that different trusts will be able to perform them according to agreed standards. The league tables will then show how much each trust charges to carry out the same service. The Government hopes this will lead to savings.

The performance league tables established by the Conservatives, under the Patient's Charter, are to be replaced with clinical standards designed to enable comparisons between the medical capability of each trust.

Leading article, page 19



Chaudhry, above, is chairman of the Harrow commissioning group of 41 GPs looking after 73,000 patients in Stanmore, northwest London. His group is one of the commissioning schemes chosen to pilot the new system. "I welcome the policy of replacing multiple fundholders with a locality-based model which will ensure there is equality of treatment within that population and flexibility in terms of the

## REACTION: THE NON-FUNDHOLDER

levels of responsibility in the primary care groups. Having a unified budget for a locality is a better system but at the end of the day we know that the total amount that will be available is not going to be enough to satisfy demands. I would not want to hoodwink the

population into believing that just by changing the way the NHS works they will end up in receipt of the kind of care they have been encouraged to expect. When they fail to get it I don't want the public to point the finger at the primary care groups who are not responsible for the health service being underfunded. There is a certain amount of bureaucracy in all this and you have to wonder whether it will actually work."

## THE PRACTICE NURSE

Juliana Vein, right, has worked for the past ten years as one of two nurses in an inner London practice with 10,000 patients. "Nurses like us are already taking on many of the duties and responsibilities of doctors, and the White Paper seems to mean that trend will continue. With my colleague we swap between issuing repeat prescriptions and providing consultations to patients. Repeat prescriptions means we have to be able to answer all a patient's queries about the drugs they are being prescribed, make sure they are getting the right doses, understand generic equivalents and keep the computer up to date. We do all the family planning clinics, smear tests and recalls, take histories and even see patients if the doctor doesn't have time. After ten



years in the job you soon sort out who needs emergency treatment and who can come back later. We do vaccinations, bandage cut fingers, take blood samples and do annual tests on all the over-75s. Without us you would need a lot more doctors and the White Paper seems to acknowledge that."

## THE FUNDHOLDER

Jonathan Munday, right, is one of three partners who run one of the six GP practices awarded a Charter Mark this month. They look after 10,000 patients in an area of Westminster with a high level of poverty. "The White Paper shows that the Government is accepting that fundholding works and their idea is to compel non-fundholders to become fundholders. But it is a recipe for chaos. With 100,000 patients in each group, there will be around 50 GPs, all with different needs and priorities. You can't get them all sitting round a table arguing and if you did you would lose 50 GP sessions while they argued. In my practice I employ a manager to do what I want, but with this system you will end up with a manager telling the doctors



what to do. I do not understand why this has all been put through this way. We were promised pilot projects by the Government before anything was done and all of a sudden there are so pilot projects and we have been presented with something before there has been proper consultation."

## Pledge to speed up checks for cancer

EVERYONE with suspected cancer will be able to see a specialist within two weeks of a GP deciding that an urgent appointment is needed (Ian Murray writes). The White Paper promises that this arrangement will be in place for suspected breast cancer by April 1999, and for all other suspected cases a year later. The health service will provide a 24-hour telephone advice line staffed by nurses. This is to be piloted through three helpline starting next March, and should cover the entire country by 2000. Quicker test results, specialist advice in the doctor's surgery and on-line booking

of out-patient appointments will be made possible by connecting every GP surgery and each hospital to NHSnet, the service's own in-house information system. It could also mean less waiting time for prescriptions through links between the pharmacies and the GPs. Demonstration sites will be set up in every region by the end of next year to examine how the NHS can be most useful to patients. By the end of 1999, all computerised surgeries will be able to receive test results over the line, and by 2002 it is expected that this service will be available everywhere.

NOTA

25.

## This takes us another step down the American way

THE NHS White Paper is a good deal better than one might have guessed from listening to Frank Dobson's hyperbole. The Health Secretary has never been a man to undersell a policy and yesterday he portrayed himself as the son of Aneurin Bevan, sweeping away the "wasteful and bureaucratic competitive internal market" and modestly promising to give "our country a modern and dependable health service that is once again the envy of the world".

The reality of the plan prepared by Mr Dobson and Alan Milburn is less dramatic, but still worthwhile. There is a good deal of continuity with the Tories' NHS reforms, as John Maples pointed out in one of

the most balanced, and therefore effective, contributions I have heard from the Opposition frontbench for some time. The Government has accepted the key principle of the 1990s' changes — the purchaser/provider split which Mr Dobson described as the "separation between planning and providing services". The White Paper proposes both to end some of the short-term disruptions caused by the internal market and to remove some of the anomalies created by having less than three fifths of the population covered by GP fundholders.

Mr Dobson made much of replacing competition by partnership. Behind this rhetorical flourish lies a devolution of power to general

## RIDDELL ON POLITICS

practitioners and community nurses under the form of primary care groups, which will align clinical and financial responsibility. We are moving to a British version of the American managed health care system. These groups will spend all the health money for their patients within a single unified budget, extending the current fundholding budgets for elective surgery. In theory, this is a tighter overall limit than now, though there will be greater flexibility to shift within budgets, which will anyway be

monitored by health authorities. However, there is a clear intention to restrain the 5 per cent annual rise in GP referrals to hospital specialists. A telephone helpline staffed by nurses is being set up in the hope of reducing demands on doctors and hospitals.

At the same time, the Government is hoping to reduce both the upheavals and administrative costs of the internal market by moving from annual to three-year, and eventually five-year, service contracts. Together with a reduction in the number of health authorities, the hope is that this will shift an extra £1 billion from bureaucracy into frontline services. We will see, though the figure was apparently

vetted in detail by the Treasury. There is a close parallel between the Government's approaches to health and to schools. The emphasis is on local professionals most trusted by the public, GPs and headteachers. They are being given more professional and financial responsibility. The assurance of quality to parents and patients will be provided by strong central inspection. Just as the threat of intervention lies behind failing schools and teachers, so doctors and hospitals will face the pressure of a national schedule of comparative costs for treating different conditions, a new Commission for Health Improvement, capping of management costs and public measures of the performance of trusts.

This is similar to the proposed "best value" system for improving local authority performance. Comparison, not competition, is now the watchword, with incentives for greater efficiency.

The missing link is patient and parental choice. The Government is relying on local professionals reinforced by a Whitehall stick and performance tables in the background to ensure improved quality. But a patient dissatisfied with his or her GP, and a parent with the local school, has little alternative. The Government needs to strengthen the consumer discipline on local providers.

PETER RIDDELL

## Patients must be treated as partners, GPs told

By Ian Murray

DOCTORS must stop patronising patients and treat them as partners, according to the first set of ethical guidelines for surgeons. The new rules are meant to put an end to the practice of doctors carrying out operations without first telling patients what the consequences might be.

Sir Rodney Sweetman, president of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, said: "Surgeons now are much more conscious of their responsibility for explaining things than they were. There is a difficulty in deciding how much to tell a patient not to frighten them, but that must all be part of the personal relationship you need to build."

The guidelines make it clear that patients must never be used as guinea pigs and should always be given a reasonable explanation of the benefits, dangers and alternatives to any operation they are being offered.

"Patients must be seen as partners and must be given much more opportunity to ask questions and not be fobbed off," said Alan Johnson, professor of surgery at Sheffield University, who chaired the working party that drew up the new guidelines.

"Attitudes are changing and there has to be an end to the old paternalistic approach of a doctor telling a patient, 'We know what's best for you'."

The guidelines are a progressive move away from the current legal position which means a doctor cannot be sued for negligence for failing to warn a patient of the dangers of an operation. The courts have held that if a number of senior surgeons give evidence that they would not have told a patient about the dangers then any case for negligence fails.

The guidelines also advise surgeons they have the moral right not to prevent the death of a brain-damaged patient doomed to living a demonstrably awful life, although the final decision must be taken by the consultant in charge.

The document says treatment to keep someone alive in these circumstances does not have to be given to adults or children who cannot think for themselves where such action is believed by the clinical team — in consultation with relatives — to be in the patient's best interests.

The guidelines underline that active euthanasia is illegal in Britain and the Republic of Ireland, but say surgeons should respect the "living will" wishes of patients who ask that specific treatments should not be given for particular conditions, such as irreversible brain damage.

Surgeons are also advised that as rationing is inevitable in the health service, they must ensure that treatment is given on the basis of clinical need and not on any grounds of social status, class or personal attributes. Doctors are also warned against "going beyond the limits of the permissible dissemination of factual information" by publicising treatments in order to obtain more patients.

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## US tribute to rebel angers Beijing

FROM JAMES PRINGLE  
IN BEIJING

CHINA reacted angrily yesterday to a meeting between President Clinton and Wei Jingsheng, a prominent dissident and advocate of democracy freed last month after nearly 18 years in prison. He is undergoing medical treatment in the United States.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Mr Clinton's meeting on Monday was "completely wrong". The Chinese Government objects to American officials meeting with Wei. The US Government knows our position very clearly.

Diplomats said Beijing was annoyed that Mr Clinton had received the rebel at the White House so soon after President Jiang Zemin's state visit last month. In Beijing's eyes, the encounter "devalues Mr Jiang's reception on the White House lawn", said one envoy.

# Swiss banks' hunger for profits stirs backlash

FROM PETER CAPELLA  
IN GENEVA

THE Swiss are bracing themselves for a winter of discontent after the merger of their two largest banks brought threats of a tough response from trade unionists. They gave warning of an unusually hard fight against at least 7,000 job losses and said they were in no mood to talk.

Politicians from all sides condemned the cuts: Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, the Economy Minister, admitted it was a substantial blow to a stagnant economy. Banks and insurance companies, previously regarded as part of the social fabric, have shed several thousand jobs recently and lost respect while seeking lower corporate taxes and posting record profits. Kaspar Villiger, the Finance Minister, hinted that a capital-gains tax could be introduced for the first time.

Switzerland's unemployment rate of 4.9 per cent is low by most standards but has risen fourfold in the past six

years: for the first time this century unemployment is higher in Switzerland than the United States. The new United Bank of Switzerland (UBS), now the world's second-largest, is likely to close at least a third of its branches.

A confidential survey for the banks last month showed their popularity was at all all-

time low. High-street customers were among their most severe critics, complaining about the main banks' reluctance to offer start-up loans to the small businesses needed to boost the economy. It is not clear if there was also discontent about the banks' controversial handling of Holocaust assets. The Bankers Association refused to publish the study, although some figures were leaked to the press.

Directors of the UBS have done little to dispel accusations of arrogance and callousness. They promised to create jobs but in the same breath spoilt the effect by saying the merger would only keep them happy for another five years.

Claude Frey, a normally pro-business Radical MP, told the banks they could expect a backlash: "In a direct democracy the bankers are in danger of exposing themselves to sanctions such as the removal of banking secrecy."

Analysts said the new bank was a multinational giant which was only "Swiss" inasmuch as it provided a marketing asset for its private banking arm, to be based in Basle.

Switzerland's banking secrecy laws have been watered down by parliament in recent years and financiers here are loath to acknowledge that they can offer little more legal discretion than some of their international rivals, apart from cases of tax evasion, for fear of losing their greatest trademark.

Last night unions were organising action against the UBS and called on the authorities to intervene. There were reports of a climate of fear inside the banks, with employees afraid to take a stand.

## Vatican denies Nazi gold link



Navarro-Valls: no plan to open Rome archives

Rome: The Vatican has denied that it stored money and gold for Croatian fascists after the Second World War and said it had no plans to open its archives for the period.

The Vatican restated its denial yesterday in a statement by Joaquin Navarro-Valls, its chief spokesman, in response to last week's conference on Nazi gold in London. Switzerland has also come in for criticism over its gold dealings with the Nazis.

"As far as gold taken by Nazis in Croatia, research in the Vatican archives confirms

that there is no existence of documents relating to this, thus ruling out any supposed transaction on the part of the Holy See," Dr Navarro-Valls said.

The charges surfaced in July when an American cable television network reported the discovery of a 1946 Treasury Department document claiming that the Vatican allowed Croatian fascists to hide gold coins and cash worth about \$130 million (£79 million) which had been taken from Serbs and Jews. (Reuters)



Donatella Versace at the gala held in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art honouring her brother

## Stars of style pay Versace homage

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

DONATELLA VERSACE led hundreds of New York's glitterati in a lavish tribute to her murdered brother, the designer Gianni Versace, amid hints that the fashion house may soon try to tone down its extravagant image.

Sting serenaded 900 guests who had paid \$2,000 (£1,200) a plate to attend the fundraising gala for the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute on Monday night. Three thousand stylish latecomers paid \$200 just to attend the dance party afterwards in the museum's Egyptian and Chinese galleries.

"We miss him," Ms Versace said of her brother, who was murdered by the serial killer Andrew Cunanan in Miami in July. "He would have loved to be here." Elton John co-

chaired the event with Ms Versace and Madonna made a speech. Both Elton John and Madonna disputed reports that they had squabbled with Sting over which of them would perform at the gala. An exhibition of Versace's designs opens at the museum tomorrow.

The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that Ms Versace and the designer's brother, Santo, revealed that they intended to revive a plan to make the company public that was shelved when Versace was murdered. "We needed shock in the beginning to get attention," Ms Versace told the newspaper. "But this is the 90s. We need to be known not just for expensive clothes but for items that are wearable."

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مكتبة الأمل



# Rioting strikers clash with Mugabe police

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

PRESIDENT Mugabe's Government was plunged into crisis yesterday as the most comprehensive strike in Zimbabwe's history paralysed government and the private sector around the country.

Violence erupted in Harare in the morning after riot police, many carrying automatic rifles, met thousands of striking workers streaming into the city centre for a rally. Police met them with baton charges and blanketed streets with tear gas fired from the back of speeding trucks.

As strikers fled, mobs of youths responded with volleys of stones and set up barricades of dustbins and metal drums. Large parts of the capital became no-go areas as the violence spread to the poorer townships in the south where mobs, pursued by police, burnt vehicles and closed off roads from the city.

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which organised the one-day strike, and civic bodies accused the Government of starting the violence. Nearly every other urban centre was closed down by the strike, but only Harare was affected by violence.

The strike was called in protest against taxes imposed a month ago to pay for a Zim\$4 billion (£165 million) package of benefits for guerrilla veterans of the Rhodesian war that ended in 1980. Last month MPs of Mr Mugabe's ruling Zanu (PF) party voted down the increases in sales tax, income tax and levies on fuel and electricity, but were ignored by the Government. The taxes were promulgated

the next day. The huge response to the strike call is seen as having far wider implications than taxes, however. Observers said Mr Mugabe's hold on power had been seriously undermined, and that he would find it difficult to reassert his authority.

Strikers in Mbare township near the city centre shouted: "Give us guns, give us guns." Claudius Mutere, a driver, said: "We are saying 'Down with Mugabe'. We are fed up with him and Zanu (PF). He has exploited us for 17 years. He must go." He was cheered by a crowd around him at the barricade.

"It is general discontent that is erupting," said Morgan Tsvangirai, secretary-general of the ZCTU. "This is a defining moment for our country."

The value of the Zimbabwe dollar, which collapsed three weeks ago, dropped nearly 20 per cent further yesterday, compounding an economic crisis ascribed largely to Mr Mugabe's recent moves to confiscate nearly 1,500 white-owned farms.

Police were served with a High Court injunction in the morning to prevent them from stopping demonstrations, but their onslaught went on until early afternoon.

"Police created the violence by not allowing people to demonstrate, which is their constitutional right," said Mike Auret, director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe.

Police cleared the city centre street by street, threatening bystanders with batons.



An African delegate lining up with Iranian women at the opening session yesterday of the Islamic conference summit in Tehran

## Iran's reformer wins over hardliners

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN TEHRAN

BACKED by a demonstration of popular support, President Khatami, the moderate elected by Iranians seven months ago, appears to be winning the struggle against his hardline rivals.

Even Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme religious leader long seen as the leading Islamic hardliner, is moving closer to Mr Khatami's reformist camp.

The two had been at loggerheads since the President won a landslide victory, signalling intense popular frustration with the social restrictions of the Islamic state. Now there is talk that Ayatollah Khamenei might transfer some of his powers to the executive. This could mark a turning point in the Islamic revolution that began 18 years ago.

"More and more important officials are rallying round Khatami, and Khamenei is becoming isolated," a Euro-

pean diplomat said. "I do not rule out some sort of gentlemen's agreement to share power. Khamenei would clearly love a slice of the President's popularity."

Mr Khatami won 70 per cent of the vote in May on a platform of tolerance and respect for the rule of law. Many here compare that result with a second revolution. "At least, you could call it

a dramatic evolution," said Ibrahim Yazdi, the leader of an opposition party.

While Ayatollah Khamenei had shunted aside the President to address the opening session of yesterday's Islamic conference summit in Tehran with an attack on Israel and the West's "carnal desires" and "gluttony", he also remarked on Mr Khatami's "brilliant election victory."

There may have been more to the unexpected tribute than merely an attempt to boost the facade of unity before leaders from 55 Islamic states. Mr Khatami, in turn, delivered a starkly contrasting message, arguing that Islamic civil society and its Western counterpart were not necessarily in conflict.

"The democratic forces in our society are now so strong they may well be too powerful to resist," said Dr Farideh Farhi, an American-educated political analyst.

Mr Khatami's popularity is not confined to the general public. He also enjoys wide support in the key holy city of Qom.

While huge, stern-faced murals of the late Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei cover the sides of many office blocks, Mr Khatami refuses to have his portrait reproduced on public buildings. Instead, his face beams from the pictures that people display in their homes.

"While the conservatives would love to turn the clock back, there is little threat of violence," said a diplomat from a Nato country. "The more immediate threat is of disillusionment and an even greater desire among people to emigrate if Mr Khatami is not allowed to deliver."

## Mahathir calls West 'meddlers'

Tehran: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, has criticised Western democracies for meddling in the affairs of Islamic countries, sheltering their dissidents and forcing them into economic submission.

"They accuse our countries in particular of abusing human rights, of terrorism, of

mismanaging our countries, of environmental degradation," he said in a speech released yesterday at the Islamic summit in Tehran. "With their NGOs [non-governmental organisations], they are able to actively interfere in our affairs, instigating our people to violence against our Government and against each other," he said.

"They give refuge to those of our people who promote disruptive activities in our countries," Dr Mahathir said. Western concepts of democracy were "no better than the feudalistic theocratic states which preceded them". He has blamed foreign speculators for recent turmoil in Malaysia's markets. (Reuters)

## UN gives warning on Islamic terror

BY MICHAEL BINYON  
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, yesterday warned Islamic countries not to allow extremists to resort to violence and terror in the name of Islam.

"They are sullied the image of a religion whose very name signifies peace," he told the Islamic Conference in Tehran. He called on the presidents, princes and ministers representing the conference's 55 member states to restore tolerance and justice "to their rightful places in your societies".

His call, a barely concealed appeal to Iran's hardline clergy to cease their support for terrorist organisations, came amid tough criticism of the Taliban and other warring factions in Afghanistan. He said it was heartening that recent talks in Cairo might lead to a transitional government in Somalia. He also welcomed the signing of Tajik peace accords in Moscow. But he had harsher words for the factions in Afghanistan.

"Why? Because too many groups in Afghanistan — warlords, terrorists, drug dealers and others — appear to have too much to gain from war and too much to lose from peace and the rule of law," Afghanistan's seat at the conference was empty.

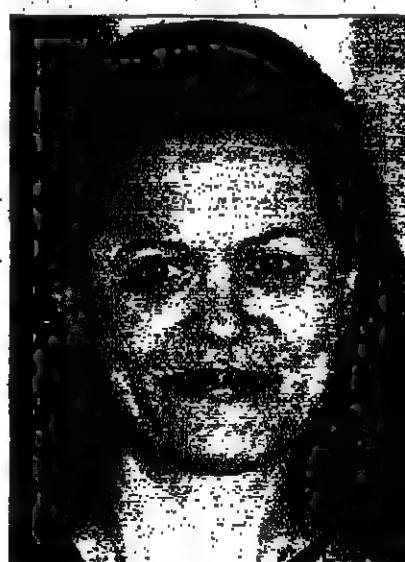
Mr Annan called on Islamic nations, representing about a billion people, to join the United Nations as a partner in promoting peace and prosperity. The UN was committed to that vision but could not act alone.

Mr Annan's call for an end to Islamic terrorism was supported by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. He said that the Muslim world was still suffering from fragmentation and disruption and was going through the worst as a result of "extensive brutality which has shed innocent Muslim blood in the name of Islam".

□ Cairo: The militant Gamaa al-Islamiya group in Egypt denied it had vowed to halt attacks on the country's tourism industry, highlighting a reported split in the organisation. (Reuters)

## Gandhi spurns political role

Humiliated Congress fails to win support of the widow with a magical name, writes Christopher Thomas



Sonia Gandhi: dubbed Mona Lisa

SONIA GANDHI, a brooding presence over Indian politics, was 50 yesterday — a day she spent in typical isolation from the sycophantic politicians seeking to abuse themselves at her large and magnificent bungalow in central Delhi. She barely conceals her disgust for them.

Mrs Gandhi has a magical name that Congress wants her to use in the coming general election to save it from an electorate alienated by shabby and calamitous bids for power, resulting in the unnecessary downfall last week of the United Front coalition Government.

But she retains a haughty distance, never saying anything significant in public and rarely, indeed, in private with the nation's most powerful men — except to tell them to leave her alone and sort out their problems without her. But senior members of Congress consistently humiliate themselves by begging her to enter politics, or at least to campaign actively in the election, due by March. They are dismissed with sphinx-like silence.

Her unsmiling, dark-spirited demeanour has led magazines and newspapers to

she might become an electoral liability if she did enter active politics. She does not seem tough enough for the mauling she would get from opponents because of her foreign origins.

It is obvious after so long that she has no intention of entering politics, but Congress leaders continue to believe that her beauty and her name could inject glamour and life into a moribund organisation.

She cares about politics only when it touches her personally or threatens to despoil her husband's name. Her life's mission is to dignify the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty. She is its guardian and preserver; it could yet be revived by her daughter, Priyanka, but apparently not yet.

Mrs Gandhi's disdain for most politicians shows even in photographs of her in the company of some of the most powerful men in India, many of them tarnished by corruption.

The culture of high-level personal corruption began with Indira Gandhi, as did the slow death of Congress. But that is not Sonia Gandhi's version of the past, which she idealises. She hated politics, and made her husband pledge before they were married that he would never get involved. When he broke his word, she was devastated. In a rare personal comment in a book of family photographs, she wrote: "For the first time in the 15 years that we had known each other, there was tension between Rajiv and me. I fought like a tigress — for him, for us, for our children. For the life we had made together, for his flying, which he loved, for our uncomplicated, easy friendships and, above all, for our freedom."

## Dreams of distant lands ease pain of the tallest man in the world

FROM CHRISTOPHER THOMAS IN ISLAMABAD

THE world's tallest man, lying on two beds placed end to end, is critically ill in a Pakistani hospital. His massive hands and feet are swollen. His eyes red and half closed from two sleepless nights weeping in pain. "It is a blessing from God to be so tall," he says. "And a curse."

Alam Channa, 43, grew until he was 28, reaching 7ft 5in. He weighs more than 28 stone. He cannot walk, can barely talk and can be saved only by surgery too sophisticated for the limited medical facilities of Pakistan.

He lies in a windowless basement room, with four constant attendants and companions, and professes two ambitions: to get well, and to visit the grave of Diana, Princess of Wales. Mr Channa would find it impossible to fit into an ordinary airline seat and, besides, he has no money for the fare. But he says his constant dreams of this odyssey sustain him.

The Pakistani Government has deposited \$10,000 (£6,000) with its Washington embassy towards the \$80,000 needed to save Mr Channa's life and

enable him to walk again. The American Embassy in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, seeks assurances that the balance will be met through government or private donations before it grants a visa. Meanwhile, time runs out.

As he waits, there are rumours that the Government put pressure on local doctors to perform surgery — which Mr Channa refused at the last minute — to prove their prowess before an international audience and that his companions persuaded him

to reject local surgery in the hope of benefiting from international donations.

Mr Channa worked for the state-owned Pakistan television network, PTV, which has so far paid around £7,100 in hospital fees. One kidney has failed, the other is deteriorating and he is diabetic. He has severe bladder problems and requires spinal surgery because of a problem directly related to his size. He had an over-active pituitary gland that produced excessive amounts of growth hormone.

He has hardly moved since August, when he was admitted to hospital.

He is not aware that he shares an entry in *The Guinness Book of Records* with Gul Mohammed, an Indian. Also Muslim, who died recently — the world's shortest man. At 22.5in Gul Mohammed would barely have reached his kneecap.

Inasmuch Channa, a nephew, complained that his uncle was receiving "care but not treatment" in Pakistan, and should be moved urgently to the Virginia Urology Centre in the United States, at government expense.

There has been a recent austerity drive but, raising his hand in reproof, Mr Channa urges his companions not to criticise his Government. Whatever happens, he adds, is the will of Allah.

Speaking haltingly, he blamed the start of his troubles on a bad car accident in 1988. In 1995 another crash exacerbated his back problems. He is married with one grown-up child, a son, who is average height. "I am glad he is not like me," he says.



Alam Channa on his double bed in Islamabad

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# European judges condemn France for failing to halt lorry boycott



French farmers' protests led to landmark ruling

THE European Court of Justice yesterday issued a landmark judgment against the French Government for years of failure to prevent protesting farmers from disrupting the flow of fruit and vegetables from Spain.

The ruling, which condemns France unequivocally for breaching the rules of the single market, bolsters the case for claims against states where protesters block the passage of goods from other EU countries. The French authorities had "manifestly and persistently abstained" from taking action against demonstrating farmers, said the Luxembourg judges.

France was ordered to pay costs. While no other immediate consequence follows the ruling, it makes the French

authorities more vulnerable to damage suits in national courts and will speed potential legal action in Luxembourg.

The decision was a victory for Britain, which joined the Commission and Spain in taking France to court. However, in a touch of irony, Britain could feature in an early test of the EU jurisprudence. Irish farmers and hauliers are seeking compensation for losses suffered when farmers turned meat away from British ports this month.

The judges' decision arrived at the same time as a letter from Lord Simon, of Highbury, the Trade Minister, defending Britain against charges that the authorities had failed to act against the protesting farmers. The Com-

**Charles Bremner in Brussels reports on a judgment seen as a win for British hauliers, but their joy may be short-lived**

mission last week gave Britain five days to respond to the allegations from Ireland after the port protests. Lord Simon reassured Mario Monti, the Commissioner for the Single Market, that "the Government takes a threat of disruption to trade extremely seriously... Peaceful demonstration is acceptable, but attempts to prevent individuals going about their lawful business are not." The Government was taking steps yesterday to ensure that

enough police were on hand, Lord Simon said. Commission officials said they had been reassured, but further proceedings were possible.

The French Government said only that it was not surprised by the ruling in Luxembourg. The Commission hailed it as confirmation that national authorities were breaking European law if they failed to stop protesters interfering with the flow of goods. "This will set a precedent and give a strong signal for the

future," said the spokeswoman for Signor Monti. Claims for damages must be handled by national courts, which will have to take account of the EU ruling. Ultimately, the decision also makes it easier for the Commission to seek rapid EU court action to halt French-type protests.

France is under pressure from Britain and other states for its failure to settle more than a tiny fraction of the damage claims made by victims of the 1996 lorry drivers' strike and faces a fresh batch from last month's week-long disruption by lorry drivers.

The Luxembourg case sprang from the Commission's exasperation over the persistent inaction of the French police against the Co-

ordination, Rurale, the militant farmers' organisation, when it staged violent raids on lorries carrying Spanish strawberries and other produce between 1993 and 1995.

In stinging language, the judges rejected all of France's arguments that it had been doing its best, in difficult circumstances and that the police had often held back for fear of sparking more violence by the protesters. "The French Government has adduced no concrete evidence proving the existence of a danger to public order with which it could not cope," it said. The judges deplored the police failure to intervene, "even where they far outnumbered the perpetrators".

episode of violent farmers' protest that had "apparently threatened" the import of beef products from Ireland. This had occurred in Holyhead.

"The police have said they will take action against the perpetrators if there is sufficient evidence to do so," he said. Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, has been angered by a decision by Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the monetary affairs Commissioner, to embark on a political career in France at a critical moment in preparations for the launch of the single currency.

M. de Silguy, 49, has accepted an invitation from Gaulist party leaders to present himself as candidate for the presidency of the regional government of Brittany.

## Yeltsin aides hoard cash in secret accounts

THE Russian ruling elite was plunged into another potentially damaging corruption scandal yesterday after details emerged about secret bank accounts held by dozens of senior figures in government.

In the wake of last month's scandal, which led to the dismissal of four prominent reformers who received large advances for an unpublished book, a Moscow newspaper has revealed how more than 70 people, including ministers, generals and diplomats, held hundreds of thousands of pounds in a shady Moscow bank.

According to *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, which acquired a copy of the list from the prosecutor's office, the compromising evidence was discovered after investigators searched the offices of the chairman of the Rato Bank and found the names of account holders in a safe deposit box.

"The investigators were dumbfounded to see the names and sums deposited," wrote Aleksandr Khinest, an investigative reporter who broke the story.

"Many of the people were household names in Russia. They give interviews to the media on how to improve the situation in the country and receive medals from the President. They are ministers, close assistants to President Yeltsin, generals of the Federal Security Service, and even one deputy prime minister."

Among the depositors listed were General Anatoli Kruglov, head of the State Customs Committee, who with his wife

**Cash corruption scandal involves**

**ministers and generals, writes**

**Richard Beeston**

held more than £75,000; Vasili Vinogradov, chief of the consular department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and now the Ambassador to Australia, with more than £25,000; Valentin Kovalyov, the former Justice Minister, sacked over a sex scandal in June, with £160,000; and General Starovoltov, chief of the Federal Communications and Information Agency, who with his wife had £150,000.

There was no evidence to suggest that the amounts in the accounts were obtained illegally, but the sums were large in a country where Cabinet ministers are paid only about £600 a month.

The accounts also raised suspicions because they were held in secrecy. Depositors never actually visited the bank and only one highly trusted employee was charged with dealing with the account holders.

Vitali Rats, a spokesman for General Kruglov, admitted the existence of the account, but insisted nothing was improper. "He put a certain amount of money in this bank account for two years and received interest. The leadership is aware of the situation

and thinks that it is perfectly legal," Mr Rats said.

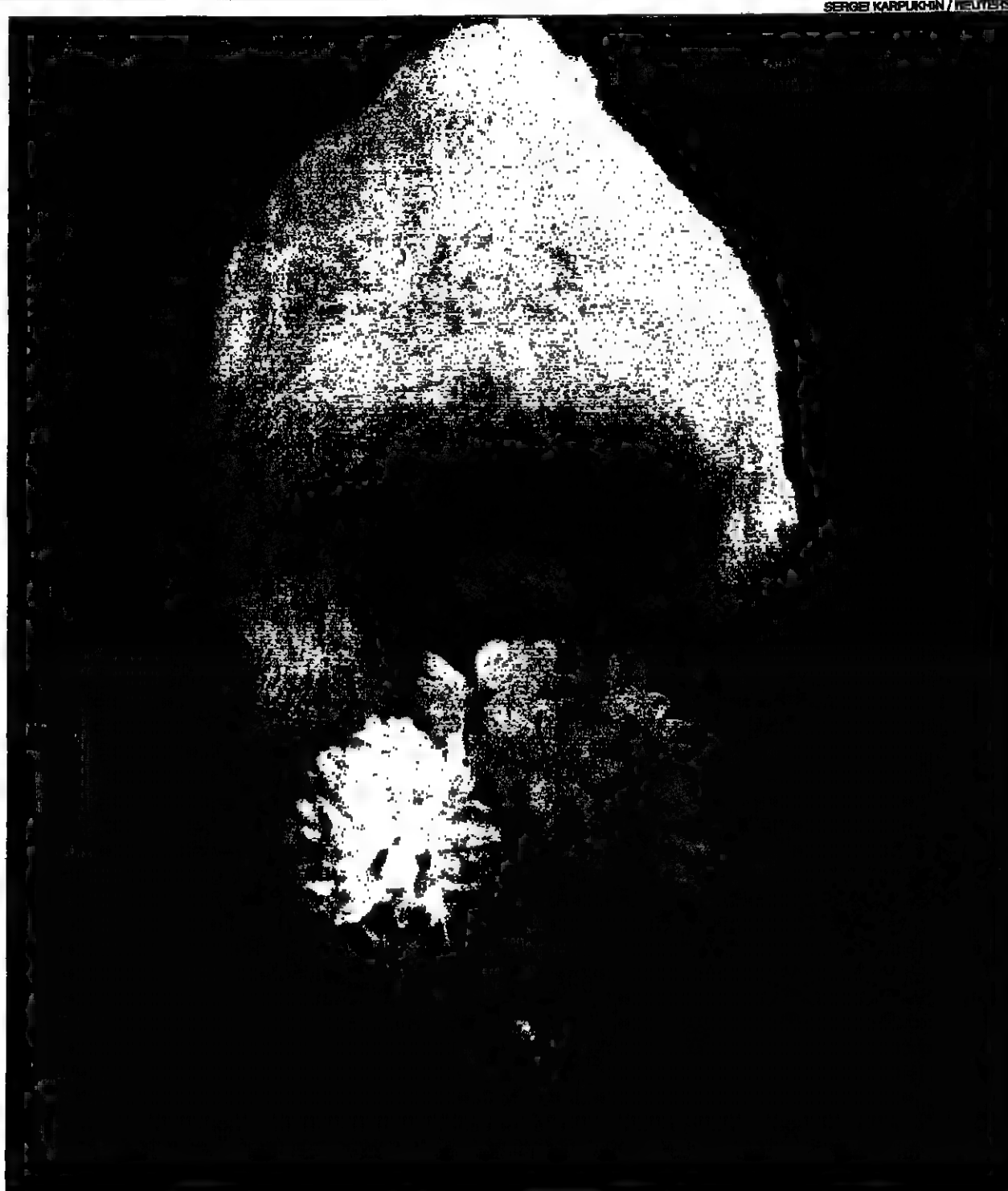
President Yeltsin may take a different view. Earlier this year, in an attempt to root out corruption, he forced top officials to disclose their personal wealth. In September he repeated his pledge to crack down on graft and bribery, which is so common that the country recently came top in the world league of corrupt states.

The military, where theft and corruption are rampant, has been the main target of the Government's efforts and several senior generals and admirals have been charged and punished.

The first real sign of action in the Kremlin came last month when Mr Yeltsin sacked four senior figures in his Government for "unethical" behaviour in accepting £55,000 each from a publisher owned by one of the country's largest banks.

While at the time the move was applauded as a blow against corruption, the latest evidence suggests that the sums involved were relatively small compared with what other officials at every level of government have been quietly amassing.

□ Jail order: A Moscow city court ruled that a general who was once an adviser to President Yeltsin must remain in prison while a corruption investigation is going on. Konstantin Kobets was arrested in May and charged with taking a substantial bribe from a construction company in exchange for a military housing contract. (AP)



Anya Shashkina crying at the funeral yesterday of her younger sister, Lyndmila, nine, who was among more than 80 people who died in the Irkutsk cargo plane disaster at the weekend. Lyndmila and another child buried

yesterday, Yana Potanina, were in state care after family breakdowns and were watching television when the Antonov An-124 crashed in a fireball next to the hotel where they lived. Galina Kryakova, the home's director, said:

"The first impact caught them. They died instantly." Another 140 children were evacuated safely. Some of them laid flowers as their friends were buried in sunshine at a snowbound cemetery. (Reuters)

## Russians 'asked for fresh IMF handout'

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

A SENIOR government economist revealed yesterday that Russia held talks with the International Monetary Fund on an emergency package to prevent the collapse of the economy.

Yevgeni Yasin, the Minister without Portfolio, said the discussions focused on new financial support, like that devised to help South Korea out of its economic crisis. In the event the measures had not been necessary, he said.

Last week officials expressed fears about a financial collapse after a run on the ruble. Confidence fell further when the IMF announced that it was withholding payment of this month's \$700 million (\$415 million) quarterly instalment of a \$5.6 billion loan to Russia, because of the Government's shortfall in tax collection.

The Government weathered the crisis and confidence among investors returned. This was due partly to President Yeltsin's success in persuading the Communist-dominated State Duma to approve the first reading of next year's budget. The parliament is due to give a second reading on December 18.

Investors are also understood to be encouraged by Mr Yeltsin's apparent decision not to take any further action against his economic team. Last month he reprimanded Anatoli Chubais, the First Deputy Prime Minister, and stripped him of the additional portfolio of Finance Minister, because of his acceptance of a \$50,000 book advance.

Opposition leaders maintained that the advance amounted to a bribe from a bank linked with the publishing company.

## Spain told of plot to kill King

FROM GILES TREMLETT IN MADRID

SPAIN'S secret services prevented a 1985 coup that would have started with the assassination at a parade of King Juan Carlos, Queen Sofia, their two daughters, Señor González, his family and the former Prime Minister, Felipe González. *El País* yesterday gave details of the plot to blow up the stand from which the King, Government members and generals would have viewed the parade in La Coruña, north Spain.

The King became the prime target for rebel officers after his intervention proved crucial in quashing a coup attempt in 1981, according to one of the conspirators.

The planned killing was inspired by the 1981 assassination of the Egyptian President Sadat and the killing of Franco's Prime Minister, Luis Carrero Blanco, by Euz, the Basque separatist group, in 1973. The plotters planned to dig a tunnel from a nearby building to the stand: enough

explosives would have been placed in the tunnel to kill King Juan Carlos, Queen Sofia, their two daughters, Señor González, his family and the former Prime Minister, Felipe González. *El País* said two right-wing army colonels led the plot. The imprisoned leaders of the 1981 coup, Lieutenant-General

Jaime Millans del Bosch and Lieutenant-Colonel Antonio Tejero, were told of the plan. During the first coup attempt Lieutenant-Colonel Tejero stormed parliament and Lieutenant-General Millans del Bosch ordered his tanks on to the streets of Valencia.

One of the plotters said they considered calling on an



A gun-waving Tejero exhorts MPs in his 1981 coup bid

## Jobless rise deals new blow to Kohl

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

THE number of German unemployed rose again last month, edging closer to what economists and politicians believe will be a peak of 5 million by the end of winter. That figure, capping months of postwar record highs, would deal a serious blow to the re-election chances of Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor.

The pan-German unemployment rate is now 11.8 per cent. About 11,000 Germans joined the dole queue in November, bringing the seasonally adjusted figure to 4.5 million. Bernhard Jagoda, the Federal Labour Office president, believes there are signs that unemployment is gradually levelling off - better, mainly export-led, growth in the West is beginning to make an impact but still not enough to cancel out the miserable

situation in eastern Germany. The construction slump and the end of government job-creation schemes have pushed up unemployment in the east to 1.47 million. Herr Jagoda's hope is that the west will continue to improve as growth reaches an annual 2.5 per cent by the end of the year; the best hope for the east is that the job market stabilises. "There are signs that the bottom is gradually being reached even though we still have to wait for a fundamental improvement," Herr Jagoda said.

Yet Herr Jagoda cannot exclude the possibility that the current trend will lead to a February peak of 5 million out of work. In 1997 the winter-end peak was about 4.7 million, breaking all postwar records and doing much to derail public finances and public confidence in the Kohl Government. With some positive results slowly trickling in, the German leader has been able to stem the loss of trust in his economic management skills. But the trend, this time from a much higher base rate of unemployment, may repeat itself this winter.



## Italian TV converted by the power of religion

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

WITH ratings for game shows, variety shows and quizzes sliding badly, Italian television executives are turning to a new audience-winner to bring back the viewers - religion.

"Not so much Madonna, more the Madonna," said an executive after Channel 5, a commercial channel, drew a record number of viewers for an evening prime-time drama on the miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary to three Portuguese children in 1917. The visions are celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church because of the "three secrets" the Madonna is said to have confided to the children, involving forecasts of 20th-century wars and the fall of communism in Russia. To the delight of Fabrizio

Costa, the director, *Fatima*, broadcast to mark The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, topped the evening's viewing figures with an audience of seven and a half million, a million more than its nearest rival, an "action film" on the state-run channel, RAI.

The role of Mary was played by Randi Ingerman, an actress and model who poses nude for calendars and normally appears in revealing outfits on the kind of game show Italians are turning off in droves. "I did not find it difficult to transform myself into the Virgin Mary," she said. "I do have a spiritual side." RAI hit back with a special broadcast on the Vatican's preparations for the millennium and a documentary on miracles at Lourdes.

The turn towards religion began when a documentary on RAI's second

channel on Padre Pio, the late Italian friar whom the Pope hopes to canonise, drew a bigger audience than a raft of blockbuster American films on rival channels.

Television executives sat up and took notice. "They have long known that a televised Mass has the same effect on the ratings as a Cup Final, guaranteed to obtain a 30 per cent audience share," observed *Panorama* magazine. But it said the present glut of Christian themes was "clearly a deliberate marketing ploy". The series culminates in a televised Christmas concert from the Lower Church of the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi, reopened after the earthquakes in September. "Christmas has come early on Italian TV," said *Corriere della Sera*. Signor Costa said Italians were increasingly conscious that the millen-

nium was just round the corner, and "the desire for spirituality is on the increase". Vatican officials agree, pointing out that it already has its own television channel and a "Social Communications Unit", which oversees projects. "TV brings religion into people's homes even more effectively than gossipers on the doorstep," an official said.

On Christmas Eve, one of Italy's leading journalists, Enzo Biagio, is presenting *The Story of a Child called Jesus*; other programmes in the pipeline include *A hundred Kilometres of History: Sacred Texts from the Vatican Archives*.

Not all critics are impressed. *Corriere della Sera* said *Fatima*'s slick production values had made it look like "an advert for sliced white bread".

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CHANGING DATES





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*There are no words — there are no words — to express what this Algerian woman is feeling. In this conflict children are killed in front of parents, people are blowtorched and bowled like bagpipes, ordinary folk are caught in horror beyond imagining. You can do something to stop these things, but knowing yourself as you do, are you more likely just to turn the page? Even if there were words, what words could touch you?*

On 27th August this year, a group of armed men entered Rais, the village of the woman in the picture, and killed about three hundred people.

They spared neither women nor children. The victims died in ways too hideous to describe.

But were we to catalogue each brutal detail, it would still be beyond our power to convey the horror of what was done.

Words can't say it and photographs, however gruesome, don't show it.

## When words lose power.

It is a filthy conflict in Algeria. Both Government forces and armed groups have committed atrocities.

The Government uses the gangs' atrocities to justify its massive repression of human rights, the armed groups use the repression to justify their atrocities.

The woman from Rais got caught in the middle.

We don't know precisely what loss she suffered, whether she saw her family murdered, her baby dashed to its death, her small daughter disembowelled, her mother's head rolling in the dust.

All these things have happened, if not to this woman, to others just as uninformed, helpless and anguished. The words on the picture come from the opening paragraph of Amnesty International's latest report on Algeria. We have become used to seeing words like these in our newspapers.

Shocking headlines no longer touch us. We're not moved, we resent being manipulated. Experience says that you'll read this page, turn over and forget it, because this is how you, like the rest of us, have learned to cope with clamouring ads.

## Listen to what the children said.

Two children, sisters of 11 and 13, spoke about the night their parents were killed.

*"We woke up at the noise, some armed men were hitting father with a shotgun. They pushed father into the kitchen and the others took mum out into the courtyard and tied her hands. They cut her throat. The other men called from inside the house and the one who slaughtered mum shouted: 'Wait I'm finishing'. We pulled mum into the house and closed her eyes and covered her with a blanket, and also covered father; he had also had his throat cut. We cried and screamed."*

Reader, wake up. This isn't a game of words. It isn't some clever advertising agency trying to score a 'creative' coup. It's a plea, a big desperate one, for your help.

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The 'Chahumeau', a blowtorch, is routinely used by the Algerian security forces to make suspects 'sing'.

Main picture: Distraught survivor of a massacre carried out at Sidi Rais village by an armed group.



# Safe, secure – and satisfying

Sarah Johnson found there were unexpected benefits to giving birth at home. It was relaxed, happy – and no stranger could have whisked her baby away

The junior registrar of the clinic was unhappy. "The baby was born at home," he repeated. The concept did not seem to fit on the form he was filling in. "Well, the midwives came from Queen Charlotte's," Daniel, my husband, added, to reassure him that this was not a completely amateur job. The clerk cheered up and filled in his form. Ten minutes later a routine phone call had been put through to the hospital and Dan was summoned before the top clerk. "There is no record at Queen Charlotte's of this baby," he was told severely.

Dan stuck to his story. "She was born at home." In the very room she has slept in since she was born last month, into the heart of her family. No stranger could have whisked her away like little Karl Hawthorne.

At home? Our friends and neighbours already suspected we were mad, because we wanted four children – now they had concrete proof.

No one expects babies to be born at home – Helga, our midwife, thoughtfully provided us with a hospital wrist tag and cot label so we would not feel deprived. Childbirth is too important to be subject to fashion, but it is. Ten years ago fathers boasted that they had helped their children to be born; now they boast that they were playing football at the time. The present vogue is to avoid pain at all costs and to embrace technology – "What about your epidural?" said one chap, wonderingly, as if it were as natural a part of giving birth as a vagina.

One relative, steeped in Freud, warned that our three older children would be deeply traumatised by hearing me groaning in labour. And what about the mess?

From the National Health Service point of view, home births are very cheap. As my preparations mounted up, I could see why. We would be using my sheets, my towels, my washing machine and my electricity if Helga, the midwife needed any of the heavy equipment for reviving babies and pacifying mothers, which she logged gallantly up to my bedroom in the small hours one morning last month. We would be cooking

and eating our own food. As I fixed a special light over our nappy changing table (for examining the newborn in correct hospital-style conditions) and queued in Homebase with a stack of plastic decorators' sheets to protect the carpets, I felt downright patriotic to think of how much I was saving the taxpayer.

No one should think of a home birth unless they can plan ahead and rely on two or three people for support. Home birth does not rule out pethidine, gas-and-air or TENS, but I have never gone in much for pain relief since a remarkable Alexander Technique teacher and midwife, Ilana Machover, taught me how to make the best of labour pain (in a nutshell: don't fight the pain – go with it – keep upright – move about). With three successful NVDs (Normal Vaginal Deliveries) under my belt, so to speak, I had a good chance of things going right, and if things went wrong the midwife had the knowledge and equipment to safe-

guard the baby until I reached the hospital ten minutes away. But my chief reason was that I hate being moved during labour. What other mammal is daft enough to jump into a car and drive for miles with painful contractions? Animals in labour snuggle down into a nest and stay put. Women often say: "As soon as I got to the hospital the contractions stopped. They wanted to send me home..."

The truth is that the trauma of a car journey hinders the progress of labour. Maybe this does not distress the baby; but maybe it does. In any case, I had had enough of crawling painfully down hospital corridors. Seven years ago, as I dragged a suitcase downstairs to a waiting taxi, I thought: "There has to be a better way." This time, I woke at 1am with mild contractions and remained in my bedroom until the job was done. No suitcases, no taxi. At 6am Edith, aged five, woke in her little bedroom next door and complained that someone was going "Uh, Uh," and it was keeping her awake.

An hour later, her new baby sister, Agatha, landed with a gentle squelch on to an old duvet spread on the floor, four miles from the house where



Childbirth is too important to be subject to fashion, but it is. Ten years ago fathers boasted that they had helped their children to be born; now they boast that they were playing football

her maternal great-grandmother had given birth to my mother 73 years ago.

A birth-circle involving four generations of women was complete. Agatha's great-grandmother died of puerperal fever caused by a careless midwife: by having this baby at home, I felt I could somehow erase that scar on my mother's life.

Helga and her two colleagues cleared up in minutes. Edith and her brothers Tycho (seven) and Leo (three) were allowed in, a joyful little procession bursting through the door. Yes, they had been concerned about the screams coming from my room – but here Mummy was, sitting up in bed, pale but smiling broadly, with a crumpled little pink baby in her arms. Obviously whatever I had been through was survivable.

The telephone rang – a Times sub-editor asking if it was "a convenient moment" to discuss my last story. The odd thing is, it was convenient. I was tucked up in bed with

Agatha, a delicious breakfast and a sense of pure elation. The awesome simplicity of a home birth was beginning to dawn on us.

For the next three days and nights I slept better than I had for weeks. No hospital bathrooms with their bloodstained floors and erratic hot water supply. No hospital food. I heard no strange babies crying, no constant footsteps in the ward. No large, noisy families partying for hours round the bed next door. No tragic, distant sobbing in the night.

Pottering round my bedroom on the third day, I thought of the discomforts of coming home after a hospital birth: repacking the suitcase, rushing to the phone, guiltily wrapping flowers in newspaper, wishing I had more loose change, more time, more energy, less luggage, more pairs of arms.

Once home, the house would seem untidy and cold. This time was different. Agatha belonged to the house, and it to her. Instead of snapping at visitors, I welcomed them. The champagne flowed, and little Agatha slipped without a splash into the river of our lives.

References: *Shella Kitzinger: Homebirth, Dorling Kindersley, 1995, ISBN 075130165. Nicky Wesson: Home Birth, Vermilion, 1996, ISBN 00918251. Ilana Machover and Angela and Jonathan Drake: The Alexander Technique Birth Book, Robinson, 1993, ISBN 1854871862*

## Labouring under a disadvantage

Amid all the uproar about security at maternity hospitals following the abduction of baby Karl Hawthorne from her sleeping mother's bedside in Basildon General, one question remains to be asked. Why was a woman who was exhausted and under sedation after a major operation, a Caesarean section, left to look after her baby?

Details of policy differ from one hospital to another, but my experience, and that of many of the women I have interviewed, suggests that these days it is common practice to leave the new mother to "get on with it" almost regardless of her condition.

"After my Caesarean, I was completely disorientated and could think only about sleep," one typical new mother told me. "After nine months of getting excited about the baby arriving, when it finally happened I could not even raise the energy to look at him properly."

"He kept crying and eventually, out of desperation, I asked a nurse to look after him for an hour or two while I caught up on some sleep."

"You would have thought that I was deserting my child the way some of the staff responded. They were all very nice and willing to help, but only within their policy guidelines, not to the extent of giving me a break by actually looking after the baby."

I delivered my baby, Stella, after at least 48 hours without sleep, and God knows how many drugs. I was in no fit state to look after myself, let alone a new baby.

But left alone I was, while Dad was chased off home, to return only during visiting hours. At the time of baby Karl's abduction (12.50am), her father had apparently gone to telephone friends and relations to give them the good news of the birth. He would have been very lucky to get much of a look in if he tried to get

New mothers are too exhausted to be left alone with their babies, says Virginia Hume

back to spend time with his new family at that time of night.

The cosy Nineties name for the practice of leaving new mothers alone with their babies is "rooming in". There are two reasons why it is so popular with the medical authorities.

First, you have to "bond" with your baby. This may take months (it takes a long time to get to know a person), but in the medical imagination it really all happens magically within the first few hours of birth, and mother and baby must be left alone for the spell to work.

The other reason is that breastfeeding is *de rigueur* today. And as there are no longer enough staff to bring your baby to you when he is hungry, he must be constantly by your side.

When these two campaigns took hold, hospital managers strapped for cash must have breathed a sigh of relief. No need to staff the nursery properly any more, not when baby needs his mother so much.

As one popular baby care manual puts it: "Rooming in can be ideal... since it doesn't leave you dependent on the nursery staff... and ensures that no one will sneak a bottle into the infant."

When my mother gave birth to me in the late Fifties, childbirth was rightly considered to be a pretty tiring and debilitating experience for most women. Yes, those hospitals were horrid baby

factories, without a breastfeeding counsellor or birthing partner in sight, but they did get something right.

They knew that childbirth was not called labour for nothing. Babies were taken off to the nursery to be cared for by nurses, and mums got ten days' rest before they were considered sufficiently recuperated to look after a newborn without help. This sounds like nirvana to many women giving birth in hospital today.

These days you are expected to be alert and on duty minutes after the big event. You are allowed to fall asleep, but you are expected to wake up again (as I was) half an hour later, then two hours later, then an hour after that and so on – in fact any time the baby cries for the foreseeable future.

Very soon you cannot see farther than the next hour of sleep. We may not have thrown the baby out with the bathwater when we did away with those baby farms, but we sure as hell sent the mother down the plughole.

It is only a short step from saying that everything is the mother's responsibility to saying that everything is her fault. No surprise, then, to find that within hours of Karl's safe return, a Sunday tabloid was quoting the baby's grandfather accusing Denise Hawthorne of not being a good enough mother.

The suggestion that the maternity care provided for mothers might not be good enough did not get a mention.

In our anxious age, the upshot of the baby Karl affair will be that many more women going into hospital to have babies will be terrified that somebody might come into their room in the middle of the night and take their newborn away from them. Meanwhile, a lot of exhausted women coming out of the maternity ward will be wishing that a midwife could have done just that.

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### ARTS

It's now-or-never day for Lord Rogers's sensational 'wave' glass roof for London's South Bank Centre. Marcus Binney investigates  
Pages 36-38

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# Why I side with the mob over Hindley

In theory, it is a perfectly respectable argument. Why shouldn't Myra Hindley be freed? As her lawyers point out, she's now served 31 years and no one is seriously suggesting that, if released, she would commit any further crimes. Justice is not served, it is concluded, by continuing to refuse her parole.

But if there's a good argument why she should be freed, it's hard to think of any reason. It is hard, even, to imagine why anyone should want to try to think of one. As it happens, I admire Hindley's barrister, Edward Fitzgerald, QC, immensely. He is a good man, as well as a clever one, and this is a rarity among his profession. Many of those who take up controversial causes do so because they want to bludgeon us with the unforseen brilliance of their argument, to make their name, go on the telly, I would swear that none of this is what motivates Fitzgerald here. Simply, he believes in justice and in doing the right thing.

I am not such a good person, and am happy enough to do the wrong thing if it seems right to me. Every principle of justice that I believe in is denied by denying Hindley parole, and yet I would still deny it her. It may be intellectually flabby and morally primitive to cleave to some instinct for natural justice rather than listen to the unemotional rationales of the lawyers, but there are worse

things to be, in either case. Many of those who have sought to defend Hindley say that there is an inherent sexism in the attacks against her. No one, they point out, cares as much about Ian Brady. Well, that's true. (Though it's not just her sex in part, the public feel that at least he has had the decency to go mad; her coldly reckoning, petulant and insistent sanity is what, among other



Nigella Lawson

things, chills.) Some are critical of the fact that she's been turned into some symbol of evil, no longer considered a person with the rights of the rest of us, a person who's served time and therefore deserves to be forgiven. Undeniable also. Others complain that she has been the victim of reactionary populism: politicians want to satisfy the blood-hunger of the public and keeping Hindley in jail is an easy way of doing that.

But so what if all three allegations are correct? How great, really, is the assault on justice, real justice?

And frankly, she is not a good witness for her own defence. She whines. She wheedles. She can't see what any of us are getting at. When she wrote an article, purportedly to put her case, to apologise for what she'd done and explain why she no longer needed to be punished, the best she could do was to say that Myra Hindley of the Moors Murders was not Myra Hindley she was today. Except she didn't quite manage to say what she'd done. It was just as if "something" had happened, but it wouldn't have been nice to mention what that something was.

More: it was as if the rest of us were being indelicate for forcing her attention back to it. Forget about the past being a different country; for her the past is a different person — so how can she, the person she is now, be held accountable?

Does this sound like someone who has paid her debt to society? I grant the idea of paying a debt to society is a quaint one, and in most cases downright archaic. But in hers it is different, in hers, the phrase fits. Society really does condemn her: the public truly finds her unacceptable. On her side, she doesn't want to be forgiven, she wants to be freed.

In this, I would prefer to ally myself to the vulgar mob than to the best legal minds: there is more honour in it.



The two fat ladies Clarissa Dickson Wright, left, and Jennifer Paterson: oblivious to the fear of fat

## A little of what you fancy does you good

WHAT I want to know is how much money did the Two Fat Ladies pay the Consumers' Association? You couldn't buy publicity this good. A bunch of dried-up puritans announce that your food is wicked and sinful and will lead us into bad ways. Delia Smith, who also comes in for criticism, is probably less pleased at the slur. After all, even if she isn't quite the nation's nanny, she is, we've always been led to believe, the calm voice of safety: never excessive, a person to trust.

Not that *Health Watch* seems to have much time for anyone, much less any of their food. The poor things seem driven by such an overriding fear of fat that they have lost the ability to see anything in proportion. They see a recipe listing a couple of fluid ounces of double cream and instantly they fear we will take to glugging the stuff, liberally. The magazine preaches balance, but seems unable to maintain its own.

The simple fact is this: eating double cream, butter, or any other current dietetic demon, doesn't in itself make you unhealthy; it depends on how much you eat of it. And frankly, better a tablespoonful of double cream every other day than a cupful of "low fat dairy product" seven days a week. Though now we are forbidden to eat meat on the bone for no good reason, a bit of thin-tipped dreariness about unhealthy eating practices is as nothing. And at least it constitutes debate, which is more than you can say about the Jack Cunningham fiasco.

Anyway, the case against animal fats is overstated. What the anti-meat brigade tends to overlook is that it is not the presence of meat in the diet that causes heart disease and cancer, but the absence of fruit and veg. It's certainly true that most of those who eat half a pound of meat a day are the sort who think anything leafy is for wimps and will eat no fruit except for the occasional banana.

But for the rest of us, excess is fine. I can't help feeling, as long as it's excess all round.

## Mammon message

NOW that we have become a nation of addictive shoppers, I notice that no one complains about the commercialisation of Christmas any more. And I, for any number of reasons, am not about to start. But I cannot leave the subject alone, either. Not this year. Not when George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has chosen to preach a sermon from the pulpit of Asda. His recorded seasonal pieties will be piped into stores across the country, with shoppers being handed orders of service and hymn sheets.

It certainly gives a rather different gloss on the idea of the supermarket aisle.

# 'I cry for wasted lives and the lost years'

Bose Agbe-Davies Mbah is a brave woman. Wife of a political prisoner in Nigeria, she was travelling through the bush last month on her way from Lagos to Britain when she was bitten by a snake or a scorpion — she doesn't know which — and nearly died.

Bose had been driving for more than a day when she stopped at a border control and tried to find a bathroom. "But I had to use a clearing in the grass and almost immediately felt myself being bitten. Then I experienced this intense heat rise through my body and ten minutes later I lost consciousness." She was rushed to hospital in Togo and put on an anti-venom serum drip, even though the doctor did not know what had bitten her. "Luckily, he gave me the strongest possible dose. With-out it I would have died."

For Bose, 33, the incident was just the latest in a continuing nightmare that began in May 1995. Her husband, George Mbah, senior assistant editor at *Tell*, a weekly news magazine, left for work as usual that day, kissing his wife and baby daughter goodbye, but never returned. She learned later that several military officers had visited the *Tell* office that evening and, after making inquiries about an article in a sister publication called *Dateline*, had forced Mbah out of the building and into a waiting Jeep. A few months later, he was one of four journalists tried by a secret special military tribunal, convicted of being "an accessory after the fact of treason" and sentenced to life

Bose Mbah's husband is in a Nigerian jail, sentenced to 15 years for his writing. Now, she, too, is a security risk. Anne Sebba reports

imprisonment. After a world outcry this was later commuted to 15 years. Mbah's family and friends vigorously deny such a charge and Amnesty International describes Mbah as a prisoner of conscience who has neither used nor advocated violence but is imprisoned solely because of his work as a journalist. Since then, the 37-year-old writer has been denied access to lawyers and his health has deteriorated.

For Bose, a freelance editor, researcher and columnist, life was hard from the day her husband was taken away. She had a two-month-old daughter to care for, Valerie, and she found work "just evaporated" once people knew she was the wife of a political prisoner. "I'm termed a security risk myself. If it wasn't that I had an enlightened and supportive family, I couldn't manage."

Bose Mbah, a diplomat's daughter, was educated partly in the UK and 13 other countries but returned home in between her father's postings. She has spent the past ten years in Nigeria, gaining two masters degrees, one in political science and international relations, the other in international law and diplomacy. She is articulate, describes herself as "naturally friendly and extrovert... I'm a firm believer in myself", and has a winning smile. But the strain of the last few years is

apparent. She rubs her eyes a lot and smokes a lot. "These days, I'm the breadwinner," she explained. After her husband's arrest, she moved in with her parents. During her trip to Britain, organised and sponsored by the human rights organisation Article 19, so that she could lobby the

Bio prison in Borno state. "That is about as far away from his family as he can get. It's a form of psychological torture, removing him from his support system. Bio is alien terrain for George, a different climate and culture where he is viewed almost as a foreigner and with hostility."



Bose Mbah cried when she saw her husband's appearance

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh in October, her parents looked after Valerie.

Bose is exhausted from telling people, who find it hard to comprehend, what has happened to her husband and her life. For months she did not know where her husband was being held. Then in April last year, she finally received permission from the Chief Superintendent of Prisons to visit George, who was being held in

told me that whenever I come, I must pass through the Maiduguri office for clearance. I have to sign in to say I'm on my way." Once she gets to Bio, there is no guarantee that she will be allowed to see her husband. "If the Superintendent of Prisons is not there I cannot see my husband. One time I was there I had to wait an extra day because he was not around."

At her first visit, Bose was given a set of rules on what she could or could not say. This included a demand that she must not cry or the meeting would be stopped. But when her husband appeared, Bose was so shocked by his appearance, "of course I cried, I'm only human. And they threatened to stop the meeting but didn't. He was so thin: I felt his ribs sticking out when I hugged him. He can't eat prison food. His skin was scaly and ashen. His eyes are dim and he has film over one."

Bose is particularly concerned about his sight. He was in a car accident while covering the last elections in Nigeria and a surgical wound on his right eyelid is infected. "There is a prison doctor who has seen him but he told me that he cannot give him any drugs for this."

Bose last saw her husband three months ago, but says it is impossible to talk about his medical condition during their 30-minute meeting. "We're in a small room with eight other people, mostly prison officials

and police, who listen to everything. They interrupt and give me rules about what I can say or do. We sit side by side and can't possibly be intimate. Once George tried to bend down, pretending to pick something up but really he just wanted to touch my calf. He said to me 'It's not easy is it', and we both pretended to laugh."

To what extent it's not easy, Bose can only make a well-informed guess. "I know he is kept in solitary and I have seen the hut where he comes from. He is allowed no associations. He can't mix with any of the other prisoners. His cell is damp and he shares it with mosquitoes, cockroaches and other insects, but otherwise it

contains nothing except a mattress. I believe he is given a blanket as it gets cold at night, but there is not even a bucket. When there is a 'friendly' guard, he's allowed to be taken to the toilet. That's why you need money. And I have to give money to the prison authorities to supplement his diet otherwise he'll die."

Perhaps the worst deprivation of all for a writer, he has no books other than the Bible and the Koran, no paper, pens, writing material of any sort, nor a table. What of the uncertain future? Bose insists she still believes in the general goodness of people and a better, democratic Nigeria. She

would like to study for a doctorate in feminist theory; she believes that women have a crucial role to play in the democratisation process in Nigeria. "But when the worst has happened you look at life differently, day by day." Until her recent trip, Bose had rarely cried. "But I cried on this trip. I cried for the wasted lives of our future leaders and the lost years and for the creative loss of the country and for humanity and I cried for our daughter. What does she think? She doesn't even know what the word Daddy means. That's a loss that can never ever be replaced."

● Anne Sebba is a member of the Writers in Prison Committee of English PEN

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# Trapped in the cage of state aid

Richard Burge contrasts the zoo's self-help culture with our museums

As any American politician will tell you, it takes something pretty extraordinary to stop Newt Gingrich in his tracks. But that is what happened at London Zoo last week. The Speaker of the House of Representatives is well known for his enthusiasm for zoos. We toured the zoo for nearly three hours. Then, in a special room surrounded by breeding colonies of South Pacific snails — more than 30 species rescued from extinction and now being reintroduced into the wild — he asked: "How much of your revenue is made up by the Government grant?" The answer is none. The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) — despite all its problems of the past — now thrives without a massive and non-accountable grant dispensed by the Government.

Last week, the chief executives of the great institutions of Britain which are locked into the benefit culture of Government funding met with the manager of their Job Centre, the Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith did not invite ZSL. I take that as a compliment. More than one and a half million people pay an economic price to walk through the gates of our two zoos (London and Whipsnade) every year. Add to that the 50,000 people who belong to our membership schemes. Our zoos are in the top bracket of visitor numbers but do not take a penny in Government grant aid. Perhaps the lack of an invitation was to avoid discouraging those who were there.

It is the provision of these large grants which deadens our great institutions and ultimately may make them elitist and irrelevant — serving the needs of the insiders and not the taxpayers who keep them alive, year in year out. We must remember that even those which charge for admission are still receiving recurrent Government grants, amounting to at least two thirds of their revenues. It is not a question of the size of recurrent grants — we should ask if they should be dispensed at all.

ZSL does receive some help from the taxpayer. We compete for scientific grants from the research councils, and, like university departments, receive support for our research from the Higher Education Funding Council. We also receive contracts and grants from English Nature towards the cost of our work on native wildlife — most monitoring the spread of disease in endangered animals — but the cost of that work is five times larger than the grants we receive. We are working in Nepal and Kenya on wildlife veterinary projects; half the cost is borne by the Overseas Development Department, the rest we raise. It is a transparent relationship reflecting both our mission and Government objectives. It is a partnership.

It is precisely this relationship — Government contributing towards the cost of particular projects or activity — which should be the founda-

tion of all Government funding for cultural institutions. The museums, galleries and theatres have clear income streams from visitors. There is no reason why they should not be able to plan to dispense completely with the Government grant within ten years, and revert to seeking funding for individual projects (you know the type: ones with a beginning, middle and end, and at a fixed price).

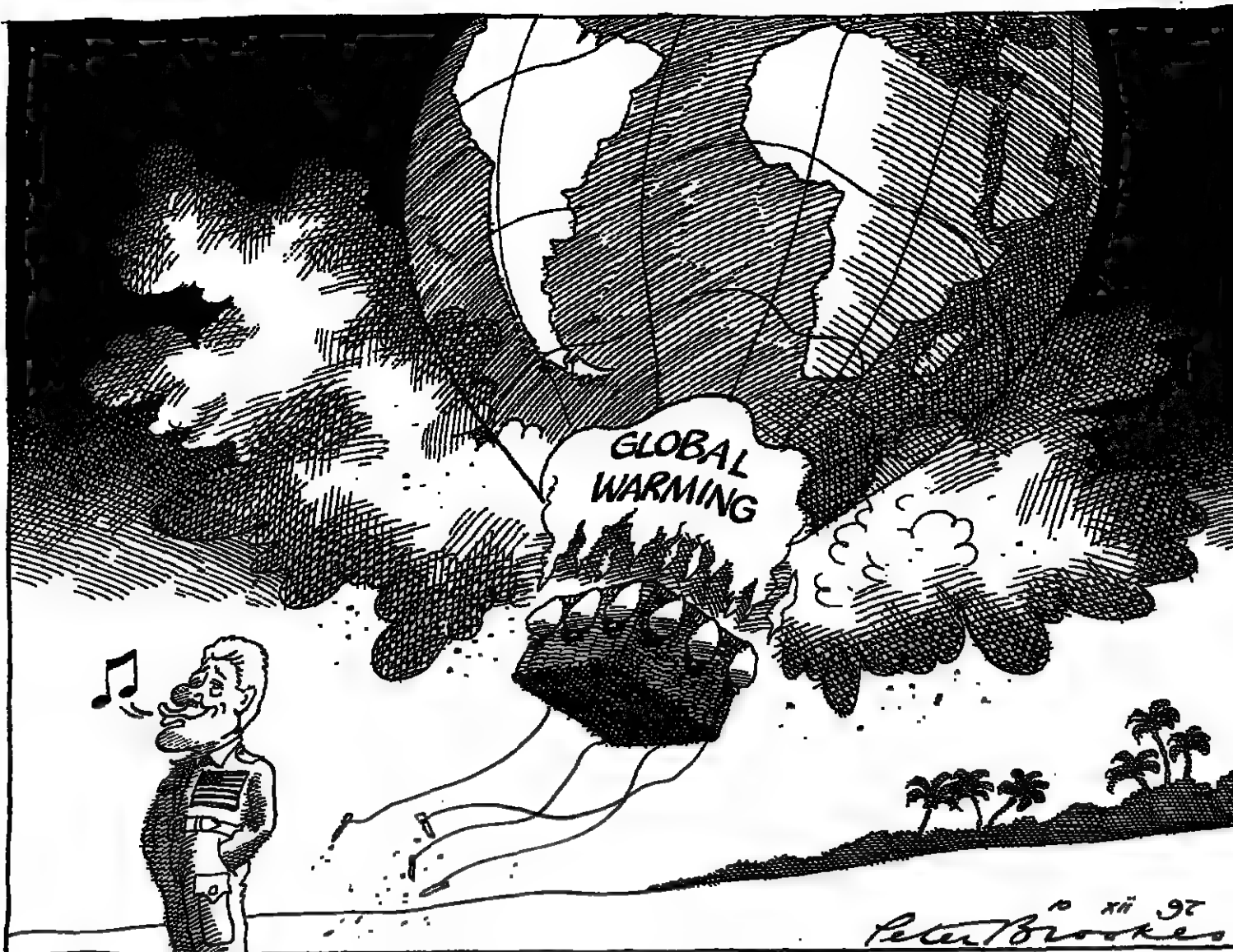
If the funding is not achieved, then the project does not happen. The skill comes in persuading the Government, like any supporter, to part with its money because you touch the chord which reflects its interests and objectives. And the same goes for the museums. Government help should not be the majority payment into a single, fixed-cost budget. Where is the incentive in that for trustees and management? It is a situation which simply creates a culture of spending money and not earning it. The dead hand of Government lies heavily — creating a dependency which takes you every year further from the people you are meant to serve.

This will open Government funding for a much wider range of institutions whose input to our national life is just as great. We are still awaiting a Millennium Commission decision on our National Aquarium project half funded by the Lottery, half by a commercial bond issue — and with no public funds required at all for its operation), but in our proposal we committed ourselves to giving every child in Newham a free school visit every year. I would love to ask Chris Smith for a three-year contract to provide every child in London with a free visit to London Zoo — and I am sure that my colleagues in Chester and Edinburgh would do the same. But there is no point in bothering him while the coffers are empty. Getting rid of the recurrent block grants to the few will enable the many to become involved.

Yes, free entry will have to go — but it isn't that common, and entry to the special exhibitions can empty your pocket as quickly as a full commercial rate. We will all have to use information technology and a bit of imaginative thinking to ensure that those who can pay do; and those who genuinely cannot afford the headline prices are not turned away.

The zoo will continue to do its work — 50 full-time scientists working at the cutting edge of genetics and ecology in more than 20 countries — another 30 staff based full time overseas on projects directly contributing to the survival of habitats and species. We have proved that permanent indebtedness is not essential to serve the public good. It is time for Government to break the mould and to start participating in success. And to insist on the same achievements from the institutions that it supports.

The author is Director General of the Zoological Society of London.



## Here's to you, Mr R

Politics and the press need buccaneers such as the Paymaster General

Let me make one thing clear. I am not related to the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson. I am not his uncle, niece, brother-in-law or second cousin once removed. Legal action will ensue should the press suggest otherwise. So anything I say in Mr Robinson's defence is based on known facts. His explanation for his exotic and lucrative finances seems wholly plausible and beyond reproach.

Labour used to argue that able persons should not be denied political advancement by virtue of poverty. Quite so. It now argues that nor should advancement be denied by virtue of wealth. Quite so again. I am with Mr Robinson. Besides, he is a Blair courtier with lots of money, a good job, a well-provided family and houses in Tuscany and France. In years to come, he may need all the help I can give him.

So much for the defence. Now for the prosecution. The press is currently anguished. For more than a year it has been exploited by Labour's apparatchiks. It drooled over Mr Blair's rise to power, was flattered, bamboozled, woven and spun. It tore John Major's Tories to shreds and told appropriate whoppers about Mr Blair's "landslide" popular support last May.

Each week, nay each day, the press is now summoned to glorify some Government initiative to the world. Laws, units, White Papers and task forces bubble up from the hot springs of Downing Street. Editors cannot run a decent sleaze story but Peter Mandelson wipes it off the front page by announcing another step down the path to paradise. Good news will not lie down. This is professionally debilitating. As a policeman's life is dull without crime, and a soldier's is miserable when ministers never slip on banana skins.

Suddenly along comes Mr Robinson. On stage lurches a millionaire MP who, like Bacchus, has been popping sun-dried tomatoes and wind-dried bressia into the mouth of the future Prime Minister as he lies by a Chiantishire pool. The millionaire emerges from Opposition obscurity to a post at the heart of government. He accepts office as Paymaster General, yet does not take a salary. Mr Peps was always suspicious of officials who did not take a salary.

Soon we discover that the new

Paymaster has an intimate knowledge of venues that once brought tears to the eyes of financial journalists, of Guernsey, Jersey and Caribbean islands of impeccable sand and secrecy, with names like Antilles, Leewards, Caymans and Bermudas. Reporters in these far-flung outposts have been sending their children hungry to school ever since the fall of the Tories. They are now back to work, with tales of blind trusts and discretionary companies, of swaps, switches, sales and transfers. Uncle Benji and Aunt Mavis, brother Esau, sister Prue, and cousins Umpteen times removed have their names in brass on Bermudian doorposts. And joy of joys, there is a mysterious Frenchwoman, benefactress of our hero. Her name is Madame Bourgeois.

You think I am joking? Surely she is not one of the Islington affair. The press will have its day. We know it is always best to be open from the start, and always best to play safe in giving jobs to friends with a colourful past. We know too that any rich man finds it hard to pass through the eye of a political needle. There is too much envy in the land. Mr Robinson, like his old partner Mr Maxwell, is the sort of buccaneer that makes the world go round. Some turn it clockwise, some anticlockwise. Since politicians are charged with the guardianship of other people's money, they are naturally subject to stringent tests of probity. When they are also charged with taxing that money, their own taxes must be proof not just against the Revenue's finest but against Fleet Street's fiercest. Labour has long benefited from that ferocity. The boat is on the other foot. These skirmishes are part of a necessary war, between the masters of government and their monitors. Few would go as far as Jefferson. "If it were left to me," he wrote, "to decide if we should have a Government without newspapers or newspapers without a Government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter." Yet the hounding of ministers by newspapers is the best continuous deterrent

Simon Jenkins

Nor was this all. The Paymaster is active. He soon steps forward to deprive the humble working man of tax relief on his Peps and Tessas. New Labour voters must eke out their savings in suburban Sedgefield while the swish Family Robinson wanders the beaches of the Caribbean with hardly a P60 to his name. Next the Paymaster masterminds a windfall levy on fat-cat utilities. He grabs £6 a week from the mouths of children of lone mothers, takes the very rusk from between their gums. He is said to be the financial brains behind Mr Blair's new Social Exclusion Unit to which, we understand, his department is not contributing a penny.

This Paymaster is at the cutting edge of the new caring but fiscally responsible Blairism. He is unbending with public finances. No loophole will escape his scrutiny. Yet he stands in the spotlight, quivering, tongue-tied and vulnerable. We watch the spin-doctors fuss round him. They spray him with Blair Protection Spray 26. M'learned friends are summoned to write the requisite judgments. M'ringeing editors are telephoned.

will signal the prompt retirement of Crawford. Sir Robin, who was one of the college's Bright Young Things nearly 40 years ago, follows in the wobbly footsteps of Professor John Alberry, who resigned after a few ill-advised, after-dinner remarks to boate members of the college boat club.

### Fag end

THE burden of being a Blair babe is clearly beginning to tell on Claire Ward MP, who at 25 represents the metropolitan blades of Watford. The other day found her in the divi-

sion lobby in support of Michael Foster's foxhunting Bill. Some of her more senior colleagues, perhaps fearing the flak, lit up. Bad move. The sensitive convent-educated Ward ordered the MPs to stub out their cigarettes. "She was screaming. Who does she think she is?" says one. She denies using undue force. "It was heaving and extremely hot and they had the bloody cheek to blow smoke all over us. It was done in a light-hearted manner but people do have to be considerate."

● LORD WYATT was an extraordinary monument to survival. He was also a great tease. I remember a hapless Frenchman once asking him to spell his name. Wyatt's response? "Waterloo, Ypres, Agincourt, Trafalgar, Trafalgar."

### Car's tales

IMMORTALITY is assured for Humphrey, the ailing Downing Street cat, who is to be chronicled in a glossy picture-book by the delightful Sheila Gunn, former aide to John Major. A Car's Eye View of Number 10 follows the rise from humble suburban alley cat, the fight against snobbery and finally defeat by the Blairs, consigning him to gloomy retirement back in the suburbs. The book won't be

to corruption yet devised by democracy. It is a modern version of running the gauntlet, flogging the regiment and decimation. Like all exemplary punishments it is usually unfair.

Can Mr Blair's Government take the punishment without flinching? Nothing so debilitating as the Major administration as its susceptibility to media attack. One minister after another fell to the Fleet Street axe, seldom because he or she was not up to the job. Downing Street evolved a ritual of self-humiliation. A minister would be caught in the glare of the press. A fulsome statement of support would be rushed from the Prime Minister. There would be more glare. Downing Street would hesitate, crumple and capitulate. Embattled ministers would dread the message, "Downing Street on the line, offering 100 per cent backing". The poison arrow had already left the bow.

Already Mr Blair has had to defend the public reputations of Harriet Harman, Robin Cook, Tessa Jowell, Tony Banks and Lord Simon. Not one has had to resign. He is fulsomely backing Mr Robinson. He may be ruthless towards those who disagree with Cabinet policy. But he seems equally adamant in support of those he has chosen as his team. For an administration that in other respects seems obsessed with media presentation, this is impressive.

Cabinet discipline should come from within, not without. The Prime Minister should make the rules and enforce them. The press can say what it likes, up to the limits of the law. It can be rude, unfair, partial and mischievous. A wounded buck can be separated from the herd, hounded to the ground and mauled. That is how the press works. But the herd can gather round to protect its own. Mr Blair's herd seems able to do this.

We might disagree with the exception of car racing from the tobacco ban. We might disagree on single mothers' allowances, on rape capping, on Peps and on the Social Exclusion Unit gimmick. But a Government that refuses to be bullied by the press is inherently a strong Government. Its strategy is not spun of headlines and editorials. Its responses are not crippled by daily attention to how each incident of administration will run on the evening news, or which soundbite went down well with the focus groups. Its mind is likely to be its own.

Alan Coren



Stay on the qui vive for a soi-disant hypnotherapist manqué

Canny as you are in the ways of this world, you will, I know, be neither surprised to hear that I receive, in an average week, some two dozen calling cards, nor envious of the giddy social whirl this information might appear to bespeak; because you receive them, too. They are not delivered on monogrammed silver salvers by periwigged flunkies inviting us to a spot of dinner at Lady Molly's or a hand of bezique with the Earl of Edgware, they are poked through our letter-boxes, often in threes, by stubbled derelicts in shell-suits inviting us to a spot of vindaloo at the Moti Mahal or a hand of cowboy down our drains.

And while these missives vary broadly in professional quality — ranging from flimsy Roneoed offers of landscape gardening, through glossy triptych endorsements by smirking former ITN newsmen of personal finance schemes which have brought early retirement aboard their own Caribbean sloops, to embossed pasteboard undertakings that every individually architect-designed kitchen carries with it a hand-written 200-year guarantee from the Filipino Secretary of State for Filled Cupboards — all evade that same alert pong of fitness which alerts the more circumspect among us to reach for our bargepoles.

And, beyond any question, the tiffest of all are the invitations to alternative therapies. These do not merely pong, they quack, and while I may be unqualified to take issue with the Prince of Wales over how much good what he is graciously pleased to call complementary medicine might do to the nation's sick, I have to say that his recent enthusiastic endorsement of it has done no good at all to the nation's malaise. Of late, I have noted a sudden, exponential surge in invitations from countless crackpots manifestly fired by Royalist zeal who insist that they alone are in a position to triumph where conventional means have failed, and that should I ever find myself feeling a bit — if I will forgive the technical jargon — under the weather, then my only course would be to ring for an immediate appointment as the world-renowned Kilburn Karavan Klinik, conveniently parked behind Burger King, where their highly trained international staff will, following the thorough diagnosis of a rooster's entrails and a full body-scan via tuning-fork techniques discovered by the ancient Aztecs, bang aromatic nails into my flesh, wire my head up to their unique Electromagnetron, flush me through with a foaming mixture of Dead Sea water and Ariel Automatic, hang me from a peg invested with miraculous healing properties by the spirit guide of a much-loved member of the Monagasse Royal Family, and send me skipping back into the world in pristine fettle. If, on the other hand, I am too infirm to travel, the Klinik would be only too pleased to drive round to my place and do it, subject of course to petrol-money up front.

Now, though all these will, as I say, instantly be binned by the shrewd majority, there may yet lurk among my readership a desperate few suffering from ailments which have hitherto defeated conventional doctors, who may therefore be prey to such charlatans, and it is to them that today's column is principally addressed. For I have this week received not one but two invitations from soi-disant healers against whom the more gullible must especially be warned, in that both claim not only to be hypnotherapists, but also to offer a domiciliary service.

Yes, they will come round to your premises, and put you to sleep. Might we not, after the briefest reflection, conclude this to be the iffest invitation of all? Might it not only pong and quack but also set clanging a very carillon of alarm bells? Because the unique concern here, surely, is not that hypnotism doesn't work, but that, unlike all those other catchpenny procedures, it does. Which is to say that there is undoubtedly a slim chance that you could indeed be put into a trance and awake an hour later to find your aches and pains gone. Which is also to say, to those of us canny in the ways of this world, that there is an even fatter chance that you could be put into a trance and awake an hour later to find your hypnotherapist and your silverware gone.



Moggie and biographer

party political," the author insists, despite admitting it was she who first suggested Cherie did not like the cat. "Although I might mention that Humphrey's life has been far from happy since the Blairs moved in. He's a Thatcherite — he makes his own way." Importantly, she will dispel claims that Humphrey was Major's closest ally. "They accepted each other's right to be there," says Gunn, "but there wasn't much small talk."

● Those who accuse my old friend the Lord Chancellor of folie de grandeur are being unfair. He is not the first Woolpack-warmer to appoint a special adviser — his hero, Cardinal Wolsey, hired that inveterate intriguer Thomas Cromwell as his "agent and secretary".

JASPER GERARD

## Garden weed

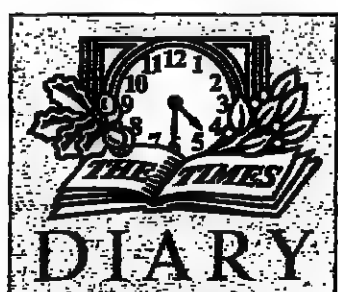
SIR ROY STRONG, the flamboyant art historian, has stalked out of *The Sunday Telegraph*, for whom he was writing a gardening column, because the newspaper's editor, Dominic Lawson, wanted something terribly "suburban". His slot has been replaced by a green-fingered sort who chronicles the delights of growing brussels sprouts on her allotment. Sir Roy is the latest silver-penned writer to leave the journal since Dominic's arrival in 1995. Sir Roy began his column in the paper's magazine last May and quickly found a metaphysical significance in wisteria lost on previous writers. He rummaged across fields of science, architecture, literature, painting and, of course, embroidery. "When my copy ended up on the page, it appeared to have gone through a thrasher and read like Noddy prose," Sir Roy tells me. "They seemed to want me to write about suburban patches and answer readers' questions about growing rhubarb or getting mistletoe to sprout in your trees." This was too much for Sir Roy, author of five books on garden design and a long-term contributor to *Country Life*. His exasperation follows the departures of such *Sunday Telegraph* characters as Beryl Goldsmith, once Lord Tebbit's thoughtful typist, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, Kenneth Rose, the respected royal historian, and the Duchess of Devonshire. Dominic suggests that his policy of bringing



Dead heads: Lawson, Strong

in new writers has been successful and reveals in his resident gardener, Elspeth Thompson, turning out Sir Roy. "She was a bit squeezed," he says. Allotment aficionados can now crack open the Baby Bio.

● TONY BLAIR has developed the most exciting make-up habits. Monday found him being "touched up" for an interview on Channel 4 with the newsreader Jon Snow. "He wouldn't let them apply the Chinese yellow foundation,"



says Snow. "He didn't think it suited him."

### Study leave

STIFF gins are being gulped at University College, Oxford, where Sir Robin Butler is about to slip into the Master's chair. Awkwardly for the college's forthright domestic bursar, Elizabeth Crawford, the Cabinet Secretary's son had a challenging time as one of her charges — and has been telling Daddy about his varsity days.

Andrew Butler went up in 1987, and swiftly ran into Ms Crawford. Contemporaries recall an exchange of views about college rooms. Since then she has not endeared herself to squirts there by supporting college rent rises. Now some quad dwellers hope that Sir Robin's brisk Whitehall manner



PLAIN ENGLISH AWARDS 1997

will signal the prompt retirement of Crawford. Sir Robin, who was one of the college's Bright Young Things nearly 40 years ago, follows in the wobbly footsteps of Professor John Alberry, who resigned after a few ill-advised, after-dinner remarks to boate members of the college boat club.

"Ta"

هكذا من الذم





## BUILDING ON BEVAN

The NHS White Paper is imaginative, but may not be enough

The National Health Service may once have been the envy of the world but it is no longer. Although healthcare consumes only some 6 per cent of the United Kingdom's GDP, a remarkably low figure for an advanced nation, the weight of expectations from an ageing population has placed strain on a creaking system. The last Government's reforms, most notably the establishment of GP fundholding, brought gains in efficiency. Although they emphasised existing inequalities by allowing patients in fundholding practices to demand superior care, they also forced consultants to improve the way they operated in a manner which benefited all patients. The internal market has not, however, proved to be a panacea. Initially it attracted envious eyes; but weaknesses in its operation have tempered the enthusiasm of even some early cheerleaders.

Public attachment to the founding principles of the NHS remains strong but the growing sense that Bevan's vision needs further renovation informs the Government's White Paper, *The New NHS*, published yesterday. Its authors hope that the template for reform that it advances, an attempt to move beyond competition without returning to a crude command and control system, will attract interest from other nations grappling with the need to build a modern health care system.

While the White Paper shies away from the radical leaps that some health-care thinkers advocate, it is not a step backwards. The White Paper is guided by the principles of empowering professionals, encouraging innovation, better informing the public, holding institutions to account through publication of standards and holding a central "hit squad" in reserve to address conspicuous failure. Those are principles which inform the Government's education reforms and they promise an improvement in the fair delivery of health care.

Like a Christmas tree, the White Paper is festooned with eye-catching gifts and an especially prominent role for angels. The prospect of on-line access for every GP, the new powers granted to nurses and the promise of a 24-hour helpline manned by them to offer instant advice are all headline-grabbing innovations, and no less worthwhile for that. It is, however, the underlying structure which is most important; while it may not prove evergreen it is at least sturdy.

The grouping together of GP practices into commissioning bodies may, depending on the vantage point of the partisan, look like the end of fundholding or its extension. But to judge any reform on its fidelity to one means of competition rather than its effectiveness in advancing the end of better care is conservative in the worst sense of the word. Given the relatively limited potential fundholders have always had to shop around, GPs should welcome the establishment of superior national benchmarks on costs and standards to make local failings more transparent. GPs will also appreciate the creation of a new watchdog body, the Commission for Health Improvement. The benchmarks and the commission create a mechanism to "name and shame" as well as nudge towards better practice those hospitals which fail to learn from others.

The White Paper does not tackle all the potential failings which can afflict a tax-funded monopoly system. Proposals to modernise the NHS which considered how stakeholder insurance systems might work in healthcare as they can in pensions could have forced voters to consider more directly what they can realistically expect for 6 per cent of GDP. The Government believes that its reforms forestall the need for a more radical examination of funding, and they certainly go with the grain of public sentiment. But this White Paper, although admirable and imaginative, will not be the final word.

## HOME ALONE

Harman's proposals are well-intentioned but confused

How parliamentary times have changed. A year ago, a small rebellion could have brought the Government down. Now the new administration has been in power for six months and faces its first parliamentary test only today. Even the result is a foregone conclusion, thanks to Labour's huge majority and the Tories' intention to vote with it.

Any rebellion will nonetheless be significant for what it says about the effectiveness of Labour's disciplinary machine, and the willingness of MPs to go along with the more distasteful choices that the Government has taken upon itself to make. What it is not necessarily slow, however, is that social security ministers have won their argument on merit.

Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, believes that lone mothers should, wherever possible, work rather than stay on benefit. To this end, her officers will be writing to all lone parents with school-aged children inviting them to an interview where job and childcare advice will be given. There is no compulsion involved, however, and the majority of parents contacted so far have not even taken up the offer of an interview. At the same time, she is now implementing the Conservatives' policy of abolishing, for all new claimants, the premium on child benefit that lone parents win, in order to bring them into line with married couples.

Both these policies have merit. A recent study of lone mothers by the Policy Studies Institute found that employment was the best way of improving their family circumstances, while remaining on benefit led to a progressive decline in their standard of living. It also found that lone parents with qualifications, even poor GCSEs, earned much more than those without. This suggests that putting them through education or training could do much to improve their chances of winning reasonably paid work.

The trouble comes because Ms Harman's arguments are often either opaque or inconsistent. Unlike the Tories, she is reluctant to make the case that the benefit system should not be loaded in favour of single parenthood or that the existence of lone parent benefits might actually encourage teenage girls to have babies, knowing that the State will support them.

This is the fastest-growing group of lone parents and the most intractable. They tend to be the ones who have never worked, who have few if any qualifications and who are most resistant to trying to find a job. Moreover, the abolition of the extra premium to new claimants perversely acts as a deterrent to seeking work. For if a lone mother takes a job and subsequently loses it, she becomes a new claimant and will find herself worse off than before. Another problem is that, while Ms Harman's efforts to encourage these mothers back to work are aimed at those whose youngest child is at school, the cuts in benefit apply across the board, so that those with pre-school children will also suffer. They may not want to work while their child is small, and even if they do, until there is affordable childcare for them, they may be unable to do so.

Ministers cannot afford to back down in the face of rebellion, not least because it would set a precedent in an area where many more such contentious changes will have to be made. But, when so much needs to be done in the field of welfare reform, it is a shame that the Government has not started with proposals that are better thought-out and easier to justify.

## THE JET STREAM BUBBLE

Around the world in 80 tries is the flight path to the record

To lose a lighter-than-air balloon is one of the first of life's little tragedies. The child cries. The grown-up sighs. But neither can reverse the laws of gas and gravity, and so the balloon sails up and away as an early practical lesson in physics.

When the balloon is one-and-a-half times as tall as Nelson's column, the lesson comes as more of a disappointment. But yesterday's unintended escape of Richard Branson's *Virgin Global Challenger* was caused by the same hazard of the balloonist's art, magnified 10,000 times. Instead of the child letting go of the string, a thermal blast from the Atlas Mountains snapped the balloon's 16 cables, each tested to hold a load of one tonne, one after the other in a ripple effect.

The race to be the first balloonist to circumnavigate the globe passes for the moment to Virgin's four rivals. Steve Fossett, the old-fashioned solo balloonist who flies in an unpressurised cabin and thermal underwear, will be reassured that even the highest-tech sophistication of modern balloons does not protect them from the basic chances of the game.

For as with sailing, venturing off the land into an alien element presents natural risks for man. Balloons seem peculiarly vulnerable to them. In 1825 Charles Green, the pioneer balloonist, climbed into his basket and lit his fire for take-off. The balloon rose slowly, but because of oversight or a practical joke, the ropes were not fastened. So the basket stayed behind on the ground.

Instead of staying in it, Mr Green and his copilot clung on to the balloon hoop. Thus dangling, they floated over Cheltenham.

The largest unmanned balloon was made by Winton Research of St Paul, Minnesota. This monstrous bubble had an inflatable volume of 2 million cubic metres, and stood 300 metres high when inflated. But it never got off the ground, and was destroyed at its launch on July 8, 1975. Count Caproni's Ca 90 was another giant stumble into the air for mankind. Like an immense houseboat with nine multi-layered wings and eight engines, it was launched on Lake Maggiore in January 1921. It would not have looked out of line sailing up the Channel with the Spanish Armada. Count Caproni ordered the reluctant test pilot to take off with a ballast equivalent to 60 passengers. The pilot revved his 3,200 horse power engines and rose up. But its nose dipped, the ballast rolled to the front, the wings snapped in a ripple motion, and the Ca 90 plunged into the lake.

All records rise on the backs of previous attempts. Hundreds tried to break the four-minute mile before Bannister or climb Everest before Hillary and Tenzing. To judge from the state of the ballooning art, somebody is going to fly around the globe soon to achieve what the Royal Geographic Society describes as "the last great aeronautical prize". There would be poetic justice if it were the man who has tried so hard and had so many heroic failures, adding to both the gaiety and the admiration of nations.

## Labour tax plans 'dishonourable'

From Mr N. J. Inkley

Sir, I begin to understand the difference. Old Labour passed contradictory motions at its conferences. New Labour stage-manages conferences and reserves contradictory ideas for policy introductions. Thus, we must look for more personal funding of pension benefits — but they attack the tax position of private-sector pension funds.

The National Health Service is under undue pressure — but the elderly (who make most demands upon it) are, by taxation change, discouraged from continuing with private provision.

We are all to be encouraged to get the savings habit — but not to get it to any degree or they will take it back through taxation. (Some, it seems, have got the habit too much already.)

I suppose all this must be the People's Plan (everything lately is a People's something) for using fiscal policy to thwart declared government intention. Now that is a new idea.

Yours faithfully,  
NEIL INKLEY,  
6 Knot Lane, Walton-le-Dale,  
Prescot, Lancashire.  
December 9.

From Councillor Graham Edwards

Sir, Peter Lilley is quite right ("Hypocrisy at the Treasury", December 9) to draw attention to Labour's dishonourable action on taxes since the general election.

During the campaign the Labour Party pledged that they had "no plans to increase tax at all". Unfortunately, it has since become abundantly clear that this pledge only applied to the rates of income tax. It is hardly surprising therefore that we are now seeing huge tax increases for all sections of the population from the rich right down to poor single-parent families, even though income tax rates remain unchanged.

The news that council tax will rise by as much as 10 per cent (reports, December 3) — three times the rate of inflation — will come as a bitter blow to many people. The gradual removal of restrictions on council spending by the Labour Government will mean that this is only the start of above-inflation increases in council tax in the years ahead.

This dreadful news follows on closely from Labour's £5 billion smash and grab raid on pension funds in the Budget, new taxes on higher education and, of course, the recent announcement of new taxes on the personal savings of many middle-income families.

It is not only homeowners and savers who seek to provide for themselves rather than rely on the State who are being vindictively penalised by this new Labour Government after only seven months in power. In true socialist fashion we are all being made to suffer. I dread to think what other new taxes they will impose on us all over the next four years.

Events of the last few months have certainly proved beyond all doubt that new Labour is still the party of high taxes. They should change their slogan to read: "New Labour — New Taxes for the many, not just the few."

Yours faithfully,  
GRAHAM EDWARDS  
(Conservative Group Leader),  
Cambridge City Council,  
The Guildhall, Cambridge.  
December 9.

## Maxwell connection

From Mr Joe Haines

Sir, Geoffrey Robinson must defend himself over his alleged offshore trusts, but Peter Lilley (article, December 9) doesn't strengthen the case against the Paymaster General by sneering him (and Mrs Helen Lidell) by associating them with Robert Maxwell.

Twenty-five thousand people (he included) worked for or with Maxwell and many subsequently had cause to regret it. A goodly number of them were politicians, including Lord Havers, Lady Thatcher's one-time Lord Chancellor, and two other former Tory Cabinet Ministers, Lord Rippon and Lord (Peter) Walker.

Guests at his home or his dining room included Lady Thatcher, Lord Tebbit, Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Lord Young, among others. It was in Maxwell's office that I first met Norman Lamont. The tributes paid to Maxwell on his death by Tory politicians, especially Douglas Hurd, showed that Maxwell's Labour-supporting employees and associates weren't the only ones in error about him.

It would be madness indeed, wicked — to suggest any or all of these were in some way less honourable because they enjoyed the fruits of Maxwell's money or his dining table. But when Mr Lilley seeks to throw the kind of mud he did in today's article it is as likely to stick to members of his own party as to others.

Yours faithfully,  
JOE HAINES,  
1 South Frith,  
London Road, Southborough,  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.  
December 9.

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

## Minimum wage 'a threat to jobs'

From the Head of the Policy Unit of the Institute of Directors

Sir, I read the letter from Ian McCartney, Minister of State at the DTI (December 3), with bemusement. He claims that the minimum wage has two objectives: to end poverty pay and to help industry provide skilled and productive jobs. The first, in our view, is concerned with the wrong target and the second looks plain wrong.

The Government's concern should surely be about poverty rather than "poverty pay". Poverty is overwhelmingly a problem of the unemployed: the minimum wage, by reducing job opportunities of those on the bottom rung of the jobs ladder, is more likely to increase than to reduce it.

We have substantial evidence to show that the higher costs and administrative burdens of a minimum wage will lead to employers recruiting fewer disadvantaged people. It is, moreover, clear to us that the imposition of a minimum wage runs quite counter to the objectives of the Government's welfare-to-work proposals.

Concerning Mr McCartney's second objective, I see absolutely no reason why a minimum wage should lead to a more skilled workforce. On the contrary, the extra costs could well lead to employers having to cut back their training budgets. We all accept that British business would benefit from a better skills base, but imposing higher costs on employers is not the way to achieve it.

Finally, I must take issue with Mr McCartney's claim that the minimum wage is supported by all sectors of industry. We in the IoD believe that it will damage job prospects and that the rigid enforcement procedures (which will still miss the rogues) will burden business. Even if it is brought in at a modest rate, who knows how vote-hungry politicians will ramp it up in future?

Yours sincerely,  
RUTH LEA,  
Head of the Policy Unit,  
Institute of Directors,  
116 Pall Mall, SW1.  
December 4.

From Dr Charles Hanson

Sir, The letters about the minimum wage from Ian McCartney and John Healey, MP, suggest that the Government is beginning to be carried away by its own propaganda. One of the most absurd claims in new Labour's election manifesto was that a national minimum wage would be a "plus" to labour-market flexibility, when it is

clear that the exact opposite is the case. Mr Healey mentions the US example with approval. Yes, they have a federal minimum wage, but this has been deliberately kept at a low level and there is an exemption for all firms with an annual turnover of less than \$500,000. Does Mr Healey advocate such an exemption for the UK?

Meanwhile Mr McCartney argues that the national minimum wage will "help industry provide skilled and productive jobs". One wonders if he has read the evidence of the Engineering Employers' Federation to the Low Pay Commission. They quote the example of an electronics plant in East Anglia — a subsidiary of an American multinational firm — which currently employs 400 workers. It is reviewing its pay structure and production process, taking into account the likely impact of the national minimum wage. The review suggests that the company "will probably reduce the number of semi-skilled production employees by 100".

The truth is surely that in committing itself to the old Labour policy of a national minimum wage new Labour lit the fuse on an inflationary time-bomb which will go off early in 1999. That explosion will coincide with the end of the two-year period which has been set for keeping the lid on public expenditure.

Presumably both old Labour and the Opposition are looking forward to 1999 with relish. One hopes that Gordon Brown and his team of Treasury ministers are making suitable preparations.

Yours faithfully,  
CHARLES HANSON  
(Economist and employment adviser),  
32 Sutherland Avenue,  
Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne.  
December 4.

From Mr Stephen Ford

Sir, Supporters of Thatcherite economics were unconcerned by the mass unemployment those reforms caused in the short and medium terms, yet alarm us with (contestable) claims that the minimum wage will have similar consequences. Why is this?

Have they suddenly begun to care about families and communities, or is it that they won't be the beneficiaries of this reform?

Yours sincerely,  
STEPHEN FORD,  
Roscoe and Gladstone Hall,  
Greenbank Lane, Liverpool 17.  
md07741@liv.ac.uk  
December 3.

being hampered by these restrictions. Cook will, if necessary, go to the wire over this issue and block Spanish integration."

At Amsterdam last June the Government agreed to a Spanish amendment giving any member state of the EU the power to veto Britain's opt-in to the treaty's Schengen accord. Since the British Government has admitted that it might well want to opt in to these areas this amendment has handed Spain a vital bargaining counter on Gibraltar.

Before the election Tony Blair said that he would never allow Britain to be isolated in Europe. The people of Gibraltar are beginning to pay the price.

Yours faithfully,  
MICHAEL HOWARD  
(Opposition Spokesman for Foreign Affairs),  
GEORGE YOUNG  
(Opposition Spokesman for Defence),  
House of Commons.  
December 8.

## Climate change

From Mr Tim Yeo, MP for Suffolk South (Conservative)

Sir, The Prime Minister's article highlighting his "Green Summit" of business leaders at Downing Street (December 4) contains many laudable sentiments and rightly emphasises that climate change is an opportunity as well as a challenge for industry.

Sadly the gulf between ministerial rhetoric and substance on this crucial subject grows wider every day. Gordon Brown's consultation Budget Statement (details and leading article, November 26) totally failed to set out the options for green taxes such as those which could encourage more efficient and clean vehicle engines.

On the same day as the Prime Minister's article appeared, you reported his personal intervention to boost the use of coal in power generation — one of the oldest and most polluting methods available. The Government's inability even to recognise, let alone make, the hard choices involved in tackling climate change is undermining the role Britain might otherwise have played at the Kyoto conference.

In particular, more effective leadership from Britain might reduce the risk of this conference producing a compromise outcome so full of loopholes that any headline target for cuts in carbon-dioxide emissions will be utterly worthless.

Yours faithfully,  
TIM YEO (Opposition Environment Spokesman),  
House of Commons.  
December 8.

From Mrs Sheila Vince

Sir, Surely the whole point of mining coal is to burn it. I am in the dark as to how Mr Blair can reconcile his deter-

## Addressing need for postcodes

From the Head of Operations of the Royal Mail Address Management Centre

Sir, The postcode is an integral part of Royal Mail's national system of delivery instruction, but it is only a part. Mr William Fisher (letter, November 25; see also letters, November 28, December 1 and 3) may succeed in having letters delivered when they bear only a street number and a postcode, but this practice is not reliable and could cause delay.

Minimalist addressing will often mean that these envelopes have to be taken out of automated sorting and dealt with by hand; they can also create confusion at the point of delivery.

The average postcode covers about 15 dwellings, but, as James Ingram points out (letter, November 28), some embrace more than that, and duplicate numbering schemes occur — closes within streets, for example. We request everyone to use a full address with an accurate postcode.

Yours sincerely,  
JOHN LANCASTER,  
Head of Operations,  
Royal Mail Address Management Centre,  
4 St George's Business Centre,  
St George's Square,  
Portsmouth PO1 3AX.  
December 5.

From Mr Robert Maxtone Graham

Sir, Some years ago my brother Jamie, having found on his machine a mumbled message asking for a copy of his list of collectable fishing tackle, sent one addressed to "The Occupier, 17 Inaudible Crescent, Alton".

The grateful customer rang again next day, list in hand, to place an audible order.

Yours faithfully,  
ROBERT MAXTONE GRAHAM,  
6 Moat Sole,  
Sandwich, Kent.  
December 8.

## Prostate appeal

From the Chairman of the Prostate Research Campaign UK

Sir, We were delighted to read of the Everyman Christmas Appeal for £40,000 to purchase a gene sequencer for the Institute of Cancer Research laboratory at the Royal Marsden Hospital (details, December 8).

The Times is to be congratulated on this initiative and thanked for its welcome, positive support of this important work on the genetics of prostate cancer. For all too long prostate cancer has had a low profile compared with other tumours.

We are sending to the appeal a donation of £5,000 and trust many members of the public, too, will make their contributions. Our grant will be the third we have made to this outstanding team. The two earlier ones concerned other equipment. The need is undeniable.

How encouraging it would be to see the target set by *The Times* met and exceeded by Christmas.

Yours faithfully,  
ROGER S. KIRBY,  
Chairman,  
Prostate Research Campaign UK,  
36 The Drive,  
Northwood, Middlesex.  
December 8.

## Public peril

From Mr Henry R. Douglas

Sir, Jasper Gerard's informant (Diary, December 9) hasn't got it quite right on the Devil and Lady Poltague.

Not anonymous, not 18th century, not "a devil" and not "one day". The original, *On Lady Poltague, A Public Peril*, is:

The Devil, having nothing else to do, Went off to tempt My Lady Poltague. My Lady, tempted by a private whim, To his extreme annoyance, tempted him.

Author: Hilaire Belloc, *Sonnets and Verse* (Duckworth, 1923).

Yours faithfully,  
HENRY R. DOUGLAS  
(Member, Hilaire Belloc Society),  
31 Austen Road,  
Guildford, Surrey.  
December 9.

## Taking account

From the Reverend John B. Cairns

Sir, How refreshing, at this particular time of year, to learn from your columns (report, Business, December 4) that the Accounting Standards Board has formulated "Rules for goodwill and intangibles".

In the season of goodwill we learn that "goodwill now cannot bypass the profit and loss account", and further that "unrecognised intangibles included in goodwill will potentially form the basis of a profit and loss charge".

It is to be hoped that the ASB has taken steps to inform Santa Claus prior to his activities on Christmas Eve. 'Tis the season to be jolly and most cheering to learn that goodwill and intangibles stand to be "amortised over their expected lives".

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN CAIRNS,  
Riverside,  
5 Kirkton Road, Dumbarton.  
December 5.







OBITUARIES

# BRIGADIER E. C. W. MYERS

Brigadier E. C. W. Myers, CBE, DSO, died on December 6 aged 91. He was born on October 12, 1906.

In September 1942, a month before the Battle of El Alamein, acting Brigadier Eddie Myers was working in the Combined Operations branch of GHQ, Cairo, when a member of Lord Glenconner's Special Operations Executive came into his office and asked him to volunteer to lead a demolition team. This was to be dropped into Greece to blow up the great Gorgopotamos railway viaduct, thus cutting the main German supply line to the Pireus and thence to Rommel's Africa Korps. Despite being within a fortnight of going home after seven years' service in the Middle East, and with only five training parachute jumps to his credit, the 36-year-old Myers accepted the challenge.

The plan was that he should contact the Greek Resistance bands in the mountains south-west of Lamia. After completing their mission, the team was to be rescued by submarine from the west coast. Despite a difficult drop, Myers managed to link up with General Zervas's right-wing EDES and with their rivals, the left-wing ELAS, under "Aris" (the Communist, Athanasios Klaras). Surprisingly, in the light of subsequent events, Myers won the confidence of both Greek commanders and led them in the highly successful combined attack on the Gorgopotamos viaduct, driving off its strong Italian garrison and cutting Rommel's supply line for six critical weeks during his retreat from El Alamein.

Much to the team's disappointment, the submarine rescue had to be cancelled, and Myers was directed to set up a British Military Mission to the Resistance forces in the mountains. He was to expand, arm, train and direct the operations of the *andartes* (Greek resistance fighters) in harassing the Axis occupation forces. He became aware much sooner than anyone in Cairo or London that Aris's ELAS bands were the military wing

of the communist-dominated EAM, a grouping of left-wing political parties in Athens, which was intent on turning Greece into a socialist, if not a communist, republic.

It took all of Myers's very considerable negotiating skills to stop the rival bands fighting each other instead of the Germans. Using his ability to turn off the RAF supply drops to any recalcitrant bands, he proposed and managed to enforce a "National Bands" agreement, whereby Zervas and Aris accepted the operational direction of C-in-C Middle East and refrained from attacking each other during Myers's time in Greece.

In the spring of 1943 the deception plan for the Allied invasion of Sicily called for a maximum harassing effort in Greece to divert Axis attention eastwards. Myers organised an intensive and widespread sabotage campaign with the willing co-operation of Zervas and Aris, but they were not prepared to tackle the German-held Asopos railway viaduct, which Myers hoped to destroy.

The British members of his team, however, succeeded in blowing the viaduct up themselves by stealth and with the help of local Greek villagers, using an almost impossible approach through the difficult river gorge below the bridge. Such was the severity of the damage that the main Athens railway was closed for four months.

By the summer of 1943 Myers was reporting on the dangers of civil war if the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo was not widened to include representatives of the mountain bands, and if no announcement was made that a national plebiscite on the monarchy would be held before King George II was allowed to return to Greece. Unfortunately, the tenor of Myers's reporting ran counter to strongly held Foreign Office views, and contrary to Churchill's wish to re-establish the monarchy when the Germans evacuated Athens.

Myers left Greece for Cairo at the beginning of August 1943 in an RAF Dakota from a secretly constructed airstrip, accompanied by four dele-



gates from the mountain bands, to explore the way ahead and to impress upon the British and Greek authorities the dangers of civil war. If more attention was not paid to political feelings within the country as opposed to those of the government-in-exile, Myers soon found that he was addressing deaf ears. The mountain delegates returned to Greece frustrated and angry, and the civil war that Myers so feared started almost at once. Myers himself was flown back to London for consultations. He had long talks with Churchill, Eden and King George VI but, much to his distress, he could not bring

about any change of policy. In Whitehall, he was deemed to have helped to precipitate the crisis by being too pro-ELAS. In fact, he had been trying to be realistic about the strength and determination of those Greeks who did not wish to see the return of the monarchy and were prepared to fight for a republic.

Myers was not allowed to return to Greece. Unhappily, his forecasts proved all too accurate when the communist rebellion broke out soon after the liberation of Athens in the autumn of 1944, resulting in the equivalent of three divisions of British troops being diverted from the Italian front

to re-establish the authority of the Greek Government.

Edmund Charles Wolf Myers was the son of Dr C. S. Myers, consultant psychologist to the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War and the first Professor of Psychology at Cambridge University. His mother was Edith Seligman, daughter of Isaac Seligman, an eminent Jewish banker. He was educated at Haileybury, the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, and at Caius College, Cambridge, and he was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1926. A fine horseman and an amateur pilot as well as being a highly

intelligent and forceful personality, he enjoyed his prewar soldiering in the Middle East, where he first saw active service during the Arab revolt in Palestine. He then commanded the 2nd (Cheshire) Field Company in 7th Armoured Division in the Western Desert during Wavell's 1941 offensive, which drove the Italians out of Cyrenaica. After attending the Staff College, Haifa, he was employed in Combined Operations until he went to Greece.

Back in England, after his year in the Greek mountains, he continued to work for the Special Operations Executive in preparation for Overlord, but as soon as the Normandy invasion took place he was appointed Commander Royal Engineers of 1st Airborne Division and dropped at Arnhem, where he organised the rescue of the survivors across the Lower Rhine. He also took part in the Airborne Division's liberation of Norway.

In the aftermath of the war he was Mountbatten's Deputy Director of Intelligence in the Far East, dealing with the problems of the re-occupation of the British, French and Dutch territories. He seemed destined to become an intelligence specialist when he was appointed Senior Military Representative on the Joint Intelligence Bureau in London, but soon after the Korean War began, he found himself Commander Royal Engineers in the Commonwealth Division on the Imjin River in 1951-52.

His last three appointments in the Army were: senior Army Instructor at the RAF Staff College, Bracknell, 1952-55; Chief Engineer, British Troops Egypt, 1955-56; and Deputy Director of Personnel Administration in the War Office, 1957-59.

After he retired in 1959 he had a successful second career in the civil engineering industry. He had found time to publish in 1955 an account of his exploits in Greece in his book, *Greek Entanglement*.

On his return from Greece in 1943, he married Louisa Sweet-Escott, who had also been working for SOE in Cairo. She died in 1995. He is survived by their daughter.

# ALLEN WRIGHT

Allen Wright, arts editor and theatre critic, died after a long illness on November 16 aged 65. He was born on February 22, 1932.

A GENERATION of young theatre hopefuls who ventured north to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to take their first public steps on the boards owe a debt of gratitude to Allen Wright. For nearly 30 years arts editor of *The Scotsman*, he took their work seriously and devoted proper space to reviewing it. He also inaugurated the Fringe First awards, which have become a badge of distinction throughout the drama world.

Allen Wright, born and brought up in Edinburgh, was the son of a civil servant. Educated at George Watson's College, he joined *The Scotsman* straight from school as a "tube boy" — named after the tubes through which copy travelled to the composing room in the days before computers. Many distinguished journalists started in this way, but Wright was told by the then editor that he had no future as a reporter because he was not a graduate.

He was to prove this forecast completely wrong. After National Service in the Royal Tank Regiment, 1950-52, he returned to *The Scotsman* and remained there for the rest of his working life, becoming an outstanding reporter and eventually deputy news editor as well as film critic.

In 1965 Alastair Dunnery, then in the paper's editorial chair, appointed Wright arts editor — at the time something of an innovation. Over the next few years, with the Edinburgh Festival establishing itself as a fixture on the international calendar, Wright ensured that *The Scotsman* had the most comprehensive coverage.

He was an early champion of the case for a Scottish National Theatre, and he was a strong supporter of new Scottish drama at the Traverse and the Citizens. One of his heroes was J. M. Barrie, of whom he wrote a biography, *Glamour of Twilight*.

As the Edinburgh Festival and Fringe expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, Wright

presided over an astonishing newspaper operation, running single-handedly a vast team of reviewers who between them covered as many as 800 shows in the course of the three-week festival run. A special daily supplement had to be produced, which he controlled from a desk groaning beneath the weight of undisciplined piles of paper. One *Scotsman* editor, retreating in horror from the sight, described it as an environmental hazard, but a suggestion that it might all be done by computer was



politely ignored. Despite the apparent chaos, the right critic was always assigned to the right production, and each week a list of Fringe First winners emerged.

Wright was a journalist of the old school who believed in courtesy, kindness, and the need to help and encourage young colleagues learning the trade. He preferred gentle persuasion to outright confrontation. But he had an uncanny knack of getting his own way. Editors who sought to impose views with which he disagreed would discover, for reasons they could never quite fathom, that an alternative course of action had, in the end, been adopted. It usually worked better than the one they had suggested.

A keen golfer, Wright had been looking forward to retirement, but suffered a stroke in 1993 which brought his career prematurely to an end. It also had the distressing effect of impairing his speech. Nevertheless, he remained cheerful and courageous throughout a gradual deterioration.

He is survived by his wife, Eleanor, and their three daughters.

# BARBARA

Barbara (Monique Serf), French singer, died as a result of a lung infection on November 25, aged 67. She was born on June 9, 1930.

BARBARA was one of the few French singers outside the realm of pop whose career spanned two generations with equal success: those who more

or less grew up with her in the 1950s and 1960s, and their children, in the 1980s. Whether in the 60-seater cabaret L'Ecluse in 1957, or before the

100,000 who came to listen in the Hippodrome de Paris in 1981, she managed to develop a bond with her audience epitomised in one of her most famous songs, *Ma plus belle histoire d'amour c'est vous*, itself written in response to public acclaim.

It was, again untypically for popular vocalists, a relationship seemingly devoid of narcissism on the singer's part: she responded personally to her fans, became friends with many, and was always discreet in her benevolence. At home in Précy sur Marne, she

would make anonymous donations to buy Christmas presents for the children of the village, and she was a regular and generous visitor to prisons and hospitals.

More publicly, in a country which was late to come to terms with the issue, Barbara was one of the first French stars to campaign for AIDS awareness and even used to carry around boxes of contraceptives for her young fans.

Born in Paris to a Polish mother and Russian father, both Jewish, she spent the war years in hiding with her family before settling in Le Vésinet, just outside Paris. She studied classical music as a free student at the Conservatoire, and her growing interest in song led her to a first light opera role and, in 1949, the hesitant beginnings of a singing career. These were unglamorous if instructive: she spent a year washing up and observing other artists at Pierre Prévost's cabaret, La Fontaine des Quatre Saisons, singing whenever and wherever she could. Then came a two-year stint in Brussels, where she opened her own, rather unsuccessful cabaret in a bar.

Artistically she was already on her way to the cross between music hall and intimiste Left Bank artiness that would become her trademark. Her first week at L'Ecluse came in 1952, and was to be followed by a six-year period there starting in 1957. This was when she confirmed her artistic identity: dressed in black, "the colour of



travelled especially well outside France — although she did make one album in German, *Barbara singt*.

The 1960s saw Barbara's audience and reputation grow progressively. She went from L'Ecluse to the larger Bobino, embarked on a European tour in 1967, and then headlined at Olympia in 1968. There she announced her retirement from the stage. It was to last only three years, during which time she continued to write and record, and made a number of films, including *Franz*, with Jacques Brel. The return to touring coincided with her move away from Paris to Précy.

On her return to the stage, Barbara's still growing audience began to get younger. It was now that she became something of an icon. One of her songs was dedicated to President François Mitterrand, and in 1986 she performed on stage with Gérard Depardieu, playing the piano as he recited her texts.

Her own performances had an almost liturgical quality to them: she would begin by moving intently towards the audience, palms open and upraised. The last, at the Théâtre du Châtelet in 1993, had to be called off after a few days because she was repeatedly ill with pulmonary infections. They were followed by a double live album and, last year, *Il me revient* an memoir, one of the bestsellers of her career.

An early marriage was dissolved. There were no children.

recordings — was Barbara chante Barbara.

The style was instantly recognisable: the voice, high and flutey or, with age, deeper and more jazzy, singing or half-speaking the words that seemed to crowd the traditional dance rhythms. The timing and expressive control were extremely precise. It was, compared to many others, an intellectual manner, but always steeped in intense, often dramatic, feeling. By the same token it was not a style that

## HEROES OF ORAN.

Part of the plan for the Anglo-American landing at Oran on November 8 was the entry into the harbour, cutting through the boom which closed the entrance, of H.M. ships Walney and Harland closely packed with British and American troops and seamen. The Walney was to go right to the end of the harbour farthest from the entrance, and her troops were to seize the French Naval Headquarters there. The Harland was to go alongside the first pier, the troops she carried were to silence the battery of 4.7in. guns at the entrance to the harbour, and the seamen were to secure the many merchant ships, to prevent the blocking of the harbour by their being scuttled. Neither object was achieved, since the defences proved to be alert and determined. Both ships, as has been announced, were sunk with heavy casualties. Two officers of HMS Harland, Lieutenant V.A. Hickson, R.N., the first lieutenant, and Lieutenant R. Billbrough, senior engi-

## ON THIS DAY

December 10, 1942

In war, as in peace, failure can produce heroes just as easily as success. The attempted landing at Oran on the North African coast was an example.

neer officer, yesterday gave to Press representatives a vivid, personal account of his experiences, which was all the more impressive to their audience for the modesty of the narrators. The only trace of emotion in Mr. Hickson's narrative was when he was speaking of his captain's — Lieutenant-Commander G. P. Billot, R.N.R. — steadfast determination, in spite of seven wounds, leaving him with but one eye and one arm available, first, to carry out the task allotted to his ship, and later, when she

was clearly sinking, not to leave until all his surviving men had been got away. There was nothing to be done but abandon ship — except that the Chief Engine Room Artificer first crawled along to see how hot the magazine bulkhead was, before the vessel blew up. The captain demanded to be rowed out of the harbour so that he might be picked up by a British ship outside rather than be taken prisoner. But his wounds demanded early attention, and he was taken ashore.

"WE DIG, DIG, DIG"

An R.A.F. officer, who had been interned in a camp in Algeria, told the following story after his release by allied forces. The camp ran a concert party. In one of its shows there was a turn based on the song, "We dig, dig dig" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The song was sung by the chorus, consisting of eight men. The camp commandant and other French officers in the audience were highly amused by the sketch. So were the internees, for at that time they were excavating a 70-yard escape tunnel, and while the concert was in progress all who could be spared were digging as hard as they could go.

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# THE TIMES

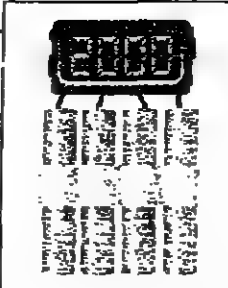
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TODAY



## BUSINESS

High-flyers  
cleared  
for take-off  
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## FOCUS

The millennium  
time bomb in our  
computer systems  
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## SPORT

Cole aiming to  
strike rich  
seam in Italy  
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TELEVISION  
AND  
RADIO  
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 10 1997

## Governments sanction aerospace and defence integration Shake-up to spur Bae and GEC



Simpson: welcomed move

BY ADAM JONES

BRITISH AEROSPACE and GEC are poised to be at the centre of a giant restructuring of the European defence and aerospace industries sanctioned yesterday by the British, French and German Governments.

The European aerospace and defence electronics industry was told to come up with "a clear plan and detailed timetable" for integration by March 31, 1998.

The message came in a statement issued by Tony Blair, Lionel Jospin, the French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, the French President, and Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor.

The politicians also called for swift progress towards restructuring Airbus, the com-

AIRBUS Industrie, likely to be the centre of the aerospace and defence electronics restructuring in Europe, is already aiming to reinvent itself by 1999. The operation is to become a limited company before a possible float. Lehman Brothers, the US investment bank, has valued it at between £9 billion and £12 billion. The consortium,

commercial aircraft consortium owned by British Aerospace, Aérospatiale of France, Dasa of Germany and Casa of Spain, as a single company.

At NatWest Markets, analysts believe that consolidation could add between £4 and £5 to the value of Bae shares, just from the savings on the Eurofighter project. Bae shares closed up 73p at £17.68.

Both Sir Richard Evans, chief executive of British Aerospace, and Lord Simpson of

which says it now has nearly 50 per cent of new orders for airliners, started with just French and German backing in 1970. It is now 37.9 per cent owned by Aérospatiale of France, 37.9 per cent by Dasa of Germany, 20 per cent by British Aerospace and 4.2 per cent by Casa of Spain. As it has been growing from a

Dunkeld, managing director of GEC, welcomed the announcement. However a GEC spokesman pointed out that European companies may also seek US alliances. GEC is looking for buying opportunities in the US.

In the UK, the statement was released jointly by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, and George Robertson, the Defence Secretary. Mr Robertson repeated his belief that the European

industry must "rationalise or die". He said: "National solutions are not always going to be available."

Mrs Beckett would not say whether it meant she would block a possible merger between Bae and GEC, nor would she say what sanctions might be used against companies who did not come up with proposals by the March deadline.

In France, Alain Richard, the Defence Minister, said one

of the possibilities for the restructuring was a single, quoted Airbus company, Aérospatiale, which owns 37.9 per cent of Airbus, is state-owned and had been seen by some as a barrier to comprehensive restructuring. In Bonn, Sigmar Gehrhardt, an official in Helmut Kohl's office, said: "It would be desirable to have one company."

European aerospace companies, led by Bae, are already exploring restructuring options. Bae and Lagardère's Matra are allied in missiles, while the French have also been forming a defence electronics grouping around Thomson-CSF.

NatWest analysts thought it likely that defence electronics companies would continue to consolidate separately around the Thomson-CSF grouping, with the possibility of future inclusion in a wider company.

The ownership of any merged aerospace company would be a likely source of friction between the European participants. The likes of British Aerospace and Dasa are more efficient than the state-owned Aérospatiale and could demand recognition of this in the allocation.

Commentary, page 27  
Cleared for take-off, page 29

## BUSINESS TODAY

### STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	5177.1	(-10.3)
Yield	3.18%	
FTSE All share	2424.81	(-3.53)
Nikkei	16686.51	(+564.94)
New York		
Dow Jones	8098.65	(-12.19)
S&P Composite	961.10	(-1.27)

### US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/8%	(5 1/8%)
Long Bond	99 1/8%	(99 1/8%)
Yield	6.13%	(6.14%)

### LONDON MONEY

3-mth Interbank	7 1/4%	(7 1/4%)
Libor long gilt		
Libor (Mkt)	120%	(119...)

### STERLING

New York	1.6533	(1.6485)
London		
DM	1.6457	(1.6479)
DM	2.5533	(2.5471)
FF	9.8858	(9.8629)
SFR	2.4086	(2.3940)
Yen	213.72	(215.15)
S index	104.1	(104.0)

### US DOLLAR

London		
DM	1.7922	(1.7890)
FF	8.5972	(8.5885)
SFR	1.4272	(1.4275)
Yen	129.65	(130.40)
S index	108.7	(108.7)
Tokyo close Yen	130.40	

### NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Feb)	\$16.15	(\$16.30)
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### GOLD

London close	\$283.65	(\$287.85)
* denotes midday trading price		

### Berkeley hit

Strong results from Berkeley Group, the residential developer, were not enough to prevent a sharp fall in the price of its shares yesterday. Page 26, *Tempus* 28

### Scotia departure

David Horrobin has made a surprise decision to give up his job as chief executive of Scotia Holdings, the unconventional drug-development company that he founded nearly 20 years ago. Page 27

## Nationwide forecasts cut in house price growth

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

THE boom in house prices is poised to slow sharply next year as interest rate rises start to bite and more properties come on to the market, the Nationwide Building Society said yesterday.

The Nationwide predicted that UK house prices will rise by an average of 7 per cent next year compared with 12 per cent growth in 1997.

The new forecast came as

retail prices data showed the annual rate of inflation remained static in November — further easing the pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates.

The Nationwide said that the expected economic slowdown is likely to ease price pressures next year especially in London and the South East where rises have been strongest.

Central London, in particular, has seen prices rise by up to 40 per cent as local "bottle-necks" have developed because of a shortage of saleable property. But the Nationwide predicts that transactions will grow by around 5 per cent to just over 1.5 million next year as more property becomes available.

Paul Sanderson, head of Nationwide research, said house price rises could now be past their peak but the "modest recovery" should have further to go especially in areas that have so far not benefited from localised booms.

Economists yesterday gave a broad welcome to the latest inflation figures although underlying inflation, which excludes mortgage interest payments, remains stubbornly above the Government's target measure of 2.5 per cent.

The annual rate of underlying inflation was unchanged at 2.8 per cent in November, while the headline rate of inflation also stayed static at 3.7 per cent.

Jonathan Loyne, UK economist at HSBC Markets, said: "With the strong pound still exerting downward pressure on costs and demand showing signs of softening, the fundamental inflation picture looks favourable."

But Adam Cole, UK economist at James Capel, said the high headline inflation could increase wage pressures and send the retail prices index upwards in the new year.



Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, the Saudi investor, who is being pressed to complete a £250 million deal with Lonrho after talks lasting almost a year

## Lonrho steps up pressure for hotel deal

By Jason Nisae and Dominic Walsh  
LONRHO is putting pressure on Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, the Saudi investor, to complete the £250 million purchase of Princess Hotels.

The British conglomerate has said it will put the chain of luxury hotels back on the market. Starwood Lodging, the US group that recently bought ITT, owner of Sheraton Hotels, is thought to have expressed an interest.

The Prince has been in talks with Lonrho for most of this year, has completed his due diligence and was given signed documentation by Lonrho last week. Lonrho hopes a deal can be concluded in the next few days but told the Prince that it would circulate sale memorandums if there is no progress.

Lonrho is also moving towards a £450 million deal to buy JCL, the South African mining group. Mzi Khumalo, chairman of JCL, confirmed the talks yesterday.

Radical blow, page 29

## Matthew Clark shares tumble after warning

BY DOMINIC WALSH

MATTHEW CLARK lost more than 20 per cent of his market value yesterday as the troubled cidermaker gave warning that disappointing pre-Christmas trading meant that it was unlikely to meet full-year profit forecasts.

Peter Aikens, chief executive, said: "We would normally expect to see 35-40 per cent of our gross profit going out in October and November. But this year will be something like 10 per cent down on that, and we haven't really seen any sparks of life yet in December." The shares dived 46 1/2p to 183 1/2p.

The warning came as the group, still recovering from the effect of alcohol on cider sales, reported an 18 per cent drop in profit before tax to £17.7 million in the half year to October 31, from turnover 7 per cent lower at £272.9 million. Earnings per share were down 15 per cent to 14.2p and the interim dividend,

due on April 7, is almost halved at 5p (9p).

Mr Aikens said the cider market had yet to return to growth, though he expressed confidence that the increased investment being pumped into advertising would begin to have an impact in the second half. Volumes declined by 14 per cent, with packaged sales suffering from the rise in duty imposed on high-strength ciders such as Diamond White in October 1996.

The group's non-cider division, which includes QC Sherry and Stone's Ginger Wine, saw a 5 per cent dip in profits to £9.8 million after a rise in advertising spend.

There was consolation from its drinks wholesaling division, which improved operating profits 29 per cent to £4 million after rationalisation.

Tempus, page 28

## Gold price slumps to 18-year low

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

GOLD prices slumped to an 18-year low as fears of a mass sale of bullion by central banks continued to cloud the market.

Gold bullion fixed at \$283.25 (£169) an ounce in afternoon trading yesterday, its lowest price since August 1979. Gold prices have now fallen nearly \$90 an ounce this year.

But analysis predicted that prices are set to plummet further with few signs that producers are prepared to make dramatic cuts in production to compensate for the central bank gold flooding onto the market.

The Argentine central bank precipitated the latest round of price falls after revealing last week that it had disposed of its entire gold reserves. The threat of a gradual sale of gold reserves by leading central banks, including Switzerland, has been the main cause of the price falls.

## Prudential persuaded to join PIA

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

THE Prudential has bowed to Treasury pressure and agreed to join the Personal Investment Authority (PIA).

The Prudential, which three years ago chose to be regulated by the Securities and Investments Board (SIB), has come under increasing attack in the past few months over its regulatory position. Regulation by the SIB rather than the PIA spared it from being fined for regulatory infringements. Both regulators are in the process of being subsumed into the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

The company has been struggling to compensate thousands of customers

who were mis-sold personal pensions. It has missed two deadlines for offering compensation to the most high-priority cases. Other PIA-authorised companies, which have far fewer mis-selling cases, such as Albany Life and Friends Provident, have been fined six-figure sums by the PIA.

The Prudential has been criticised by Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, over its progress in paying compensation. Prudential yesterday said it had not been forced to join the PIA by the Treasury.

Sir Peter Davis, Prudential chief executive, said: "We are in the anomalous position of being the only life insurance company in the UK not

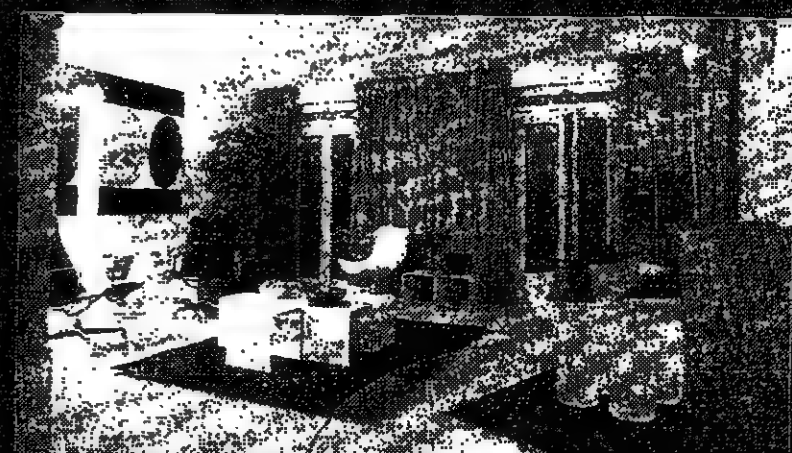
regulated by the PIA. I have discussed regulatory arrangements with Howard Davies, chairman of the FSA. He and I agree it would be right to change these arrangements."

Mick Newmarch, Prudential's controversial former chief executive, had insisted on regulation by the SIB, because he believed self-regulation did not work.

The PIA yesterday also announced the appointment of Roger Bright as chief executive to replace Colette Bowe who leaves on January 1. Mr Bright was previously head of the PIA's supervision and authorisation division.

Commentary, page 27

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Davis: "anomalous position"







# Sir Peter does the prudent thing



COMMENTARY  
by our City Editor

Sir Peter Davis has graciously agreed to bring the Prudential back to the fold of regulatory respectability. With its soon to be sold to the nation's savers and the Government planning to push more pensions and health insurance towards the private sector, this is no time to be on the outside.

Howard Davies, now busy reshaping the regulation of financial services under his Financial Services Authority umbrella, has made clear his wish to bring the Pru into line. Subjecting the Prudential to the scrutiny of the Personal Investment Authority is a gesture of good intent that Sir Peter can well afford to make. If his organisation does not improve its lamentable performance on clearing up the debris from its mis-selling of personal pensions, he could face a hefty membership fee, for, as it heads towards extinction, the PIA is gaining a taste for levying fines. But, as Sir Peter will be well aware, it cannot charge retrospectively, so the Pru's failure to meet previous deadlines will go unpunished, save for the "naming and shaming" efforts of the Treasury Minister, Helen Liddell.

Her verbal chastisements may have been partially responsible for persuading Sir Peter to go on national television and apologise, in the mode pioneered by

the Prime Minister. At least he had the grace to abstain from the "I'm a good bloke, you can trust honest Pete" routine.

But those organisations which have been fined by the PIA have become increasingly irate that the Pru, one of the worst offenders in the pensions debacle, should have escaped with a mea culpa rather than hard cash.

This was the legacy of the irascible Mick Newmarch, the former Pru chief executive. In 1994, when the PIA was being set up, he refused to join because of his philosophical objections to self-regulation. Newmarch had been at the Pru all his working life so his fears were grounded in experience. Those still waiting for compensation for their mis-sold pensions can testify to just how right he was.

The inimitable Newmarch insisted that the Pru reported solely to the Securities & Investments Board, not the PIA. The ironic result has been that the financial services industry, including the Pru, put on a massive demonstration of its inability to treat customers fairly but Newmarch's presence

meant the Pru escaped the fines. No wonder he is now being quietly invited back into the City. Already installed as chairman of Bourne End, a small property company, accountants Price Waterhouse recently signed him up as a consultant to their Shareholder Value Services, which claims to advise clients on maximising shareholder value.

## EU plans French defence giant

Without a shot being fired or a euro changing hands, the first part of the French plan to take control of Britain's most successful manufacturing industry has been accomplished. Britain's unworldly ministers, along with their German counterparts, have told their private sector firms to

prepare plans to merge with France's state player in an "equal partnership".

The model for this is to be a fully corporate version of Airbus, the French-designed and French headquartered consortium built round France's state-owned Aerospatiale. France has already put forward Noël Forgeard, managing director of France's Matra, to become boss of the much-expanded Airbus.

Quite how the equal partnership would work formally is not yet clear. The key, however, is that the French Government intends to retain full control of Aerospatiale as it has rightly made clear from the start.

Starry-eyed Brits, who want this scheme to prove their euro-credentials, said nothing of the inevitable French dominance. Norbert Lammert, Germany's aviation minister, claimed pi-

ously that French state control is now "less heavy-handed".

Such wish-fulfilling flannel does not wash with everyone. The French private sector is made of sterner stuff, as it showed over Crédit Lyonnais. Dassault refuses to merge with Aerospatiale while the latter is under state control. So as George Robertson offered UK companies a choice between urgent action or rapid demise, his French counterpart said that merging defence sectors into mega-Airbus will just have to wait.

Britain should not countenance any EU defence grouping with a top-sided French state interest. Nor should it allow a pan-European deal before UK interests have been strengthened by putting together GEC-Marconi and BAE (along with GKN and Rolls-Royce). But intransigent French insistence on he-

emony over all joint enterprises pales beside the Anglo-Saxon ego. This winning UK industry will probably be gift-wrapped and handed over before Sir Richard Evans and Lord Simpson can agree which would call the shots at a merged GEC-BAE.

## Safeway back on the shopping list

The triumphant return on which Tesco has brought a halt to its French adventure underline the strength of the top team at the grocer's Cheshunt headquarters and stimulate unflattering comparisons with some of its rivals.

The £253 million deal sees Tesco selling at what must be near the top of the market. Faced with the choice of paying top franc itself to gain worthwhile scale or letting others pay for that privilege, Tesco decided to exit. Lord MacLaurin groomed his successors carefully and would have been proud of their decision.

But while chief executive Terry Leahy is building on the strength

that MacLaurin created, Safeway continues to look vulnerable. The chaps Sir Alistair Grant has left minding the shop may not have the toughness of the grocery business sufficiently embedded in them. Yesterday the rumours that Asda, a far more aggressive animal, may be planning a hostile bid were in the market once more. Asda denies the story, insisting that the merger talks between the two are not going to be resurrected because Mrs Beckett might object.

Nonetheless, Asda would like to get its claws on the larger stores in the Safeway portfolio. A carve up of the Safeway business would upset Molly, smirking star of the chain's commercials, but customers would probably not grieve for too long.

## Playing tag

THE vast Bluewater Park shopping centre being built near Dartford is already 70 per cent let and is promising to bring a welcome financial bonus to Blue Circle, which owned the site. More than £50 million could cascade towards the company if rents pour in as planned. But there will be other beneficiaries, including the makers of electronic tagging devices. Children visiting the centre will be tagged to avoid escape.

# Scotia Holdings founder quits in surprise move

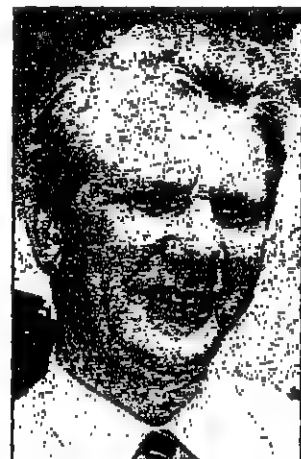
By PAUL DURMAN

DAVID HORROBIN has made a surprise decision to give up his job as chief executive of Scotia Holdings, the unconventional drug-development company that he founded nearly 20 years ago.

Sherri Clarkson, Dr Horrobin's wife and head of Scotia's drug-discovery division, is also leaving, along with Jeff Boily, who was responsible for worldwide commercial operations.

Dr Horrobin plans to pay Scotia an initial £1 million to take on several early-stage projects in schizophrenia and asthma.

Dr Horrobin's decision to leave comes barely three months after Robert Dow joined Scotia as its medical and development director. Dr Dow was previously worldwide head of development at Roche, one of the world's



Horrobin: research whiz

largest pharmaceutical groups. He will replace Dr Horrobin as chief executive.

Dr Horrobin, 58, said that he had not come under any pressure to leave and simply wanted to spend more time on research and development.

He said: "I want to start again and build something up again. Everybody would say that I am extremely good at R&D but that I do not have any special management skills."

Scotia is unusual for its emphasis on the fatty molecules known as lipids. In spite of its small size — with 400 employees and annual sales running at about £20 million — the company's operations are widely spread, with facilities in Carlisle, Stirling, Nova Scotia, southern Sweden and even on the Isle of Lewis.

Dr Horrobin has steered

several lipid-based products through full clinical trials but has found it more difficult to secure marketing approvals.

Scotia's shares collapsed earlier this year when the UK's Medicines Control Agency turned down approval of Tarabec, the company's treatment for the nerve damage caused by diabetes.

Subject to shareholders' approval, Scotia intends to grant Dr Horrobin the rights to develop up to 15 compounds from the company's technology in the fields of psychiatry, the central nervous system and asthma.

Scotia will retain royalty rights to the potential products, and could also receive other payments totalling up to £41 million if all 15 products are developed.

Dr Horrobin plans to sell some of his family trust's interest in 13.1 million shares (worth about £54 million yesterday) to finance his new venture. He has agreed to retain at least nine million shares for a year. He will remain a non-executive director of Scotia, and continue to act as a consultant on patents.

## Vaux rises as Swallow soars

SWALLOW HOTELS was once again the star performer as Vaux, the brewing and leisure group, reported a 10 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £38.3 million for the year to the end of September (Dominic Walsh writes).

Profits at Swallow were up 16.6 per cent to £28 million as average room occupancy rose from 71.7 to 73.5 per cent and the room rate climbed 8 per cent to £49.40.

Managed houses raised profits 9.6 per cent to £9.8 million while tenancies dipped 8.2 per cent to £11.8 million on a reduction in pub numbers.

Brewing and wholesaling was up 6.8 per cent to £4.8 million.

Earnings per share were up 11.7 per cent to 23.4p and the final dividend, payable on February 6, is 7.4p, making 11.1p up from 10.6p.

## Compass turns to strategy of organic growth

By DOMINIC WALSH

FRANCIS MACKAY, chief executive of Compass Group, the contract catering company, yesterday ruled out further big acquisitions and vowed to pursue significant organic growth.

After a year in which Compass acquired Daka International of the US and leapt to third in the French market with the purchase of SHRM, Mr Mackay said: "We're moving away from the big acquisition and looking at gripping what we've got."

His comments came as the group reported a 20 per cent rise in profits before tax and exceptional to £137.2 million from turnover 40 per cent ahead at £3.7 billion. UK operating profits were 17 per cent up at £47.6 million, on margins up from 6.9 to 7.1 per cent. Like-for-like turnover was 11 per cent ahead in the UK compared with

8 per cent in continental Europe and North America. Contract wins during the year included the staff catering at Euro Disneyland and at Heathrow. It will also operate the catering at the Stade de France, the new Paris stadium that will host some of next year's World Cup matches.

Mr Mackay said the prospects for "significant organic growth" were excellent for the next few years. "The process of outsourcing is moving into new sectors of health and education. In the US alone there is still over \$25 billion (£15 billion) worth of business yet to be outsourced."

Adjusted earnings per share were up 18.1 per cent to 31.3p and a final dividend of 6.7p, to be paid on April 7, makes 8.8p (8.6p).

## Profits sink at Hozelock

HEAVY rainfall, the strong pound and continued hosepipe bans have all caused headaches for Hozelock, the garden equipment manufacturer, which yesterday reported a 27 per cent plunge in pre-tax profits for the year to September 27 from £9.8 million to £7.1 million (Chris Ayres writes).

The company's shares have also suffered, falling from 551p last year to a low of 280p after the wettest June this century. They were unchanged yesterday at 316p.

Hozelock said it had ended the year on a more positive note, with sales up by 3.1 per cent from £51 million to £52.6 million.

Earnings per share fell by 26 per cent to 20.1p (27.3p) and a final dividend of 7.9p will be paid on February 13, bringing the total to 11.3p (11p).

Tempus, page 28

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## Tesco to earn £80m profit in French sale

By CHRIS AYRES

TESCO, the UK supermarket group, will earn almost £80 million profit on the sale of Cateau, its troubled French food retail division (see Commentary this page).

Cateau has been sold to Promodès, its French rival, for £253 million, significantly higher than the £225 million expected. The deal is subject to the approval of the European Commission. Tesco will keep its Tesco Vin Plus stores at Cité d'Europe in Calais.

The move ends Tesco's ambitious expansion plans for France, which were scuppered by intense local competition, rigid planning rules and high prices. It bought Cateau, which operates 105 stores, for £178 million in 1993, and appointed a French industry heavyweight as president. However, the group still failed to make a significant profit.

Tesco will focus instead on emerging markets in central Europe. It already has 91 stores in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, and plans to open stores on a further 16 sites.

## Brokerage cuts service

By RICHARD MILES

FIDELITY Brokerage Services, the telephone-based stockbroker, is withdrawing from the institutional securities market following a six-month strategic review of operations.

The company said yesterday that it is to wind down its capital markets operation with immediate effect. But it declined to comment on the level of job losses that would result from the closure.

Fidelity's decision to shut down its institutional business follows a £250,000 fine from the Securities and Futures Authority, the City watchdog, after the discovery of a string of administrative and computer problems.

## Strong pound fails to halt BTP advance

BTP, the chemicals company, lifted pre-tax profits to £25.16 million from £23.66 million in the half-year to the end of September, in spite of an adverse £1.8 million translation effect from the strength of sterling (Martin Barrow writes).

Acquisitions contributed £3.2 million to group operating profits that rose to £27.2 million from £24.6 million previously. Steve Hannam, chief executive, said the fine chemicals division enjoyed a particularly strong first half, helped by the £44.3 million acquisition of PCR, based in Florida.

Earnings were 10.53p a share, up from 9.91p previously.

The interim dividend is increased to 4.2p a share from 4.05p.

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Stock Market Writer  
of the Year

## Banks underpin prices as buyers look for rally

SHARE prices in London closed with modest losses, but brokers are convinced the market is already building up a full head of steam for the seasonal pre-Christmas rally.

The equity market was certainly resilient enough to shrug off an opening fall of almost 60 points on Wall Street in the wake of several significant profit warnings.

After losing an early lead, the FTSE 100 index put in a late rally, reducing a 32-point deficit to just 10.3 at 5,177.1 by the close. A total of 803 million shares changed hands.

Sentiment was bolstered by the unchanged inflation rate and further evidence of a slowdown in high street spending. It is hoped these latest indicators may be enough to prevent any further rises in interest rates.

Once again it was the banks that underpinned the market in the hope that this week's merger between Swiss Bank Corporation and Union Bank of Switzerland will prompt a spate of similar moves in this country. Barclays rose 66p to £16.39, Alliance & Leicester 16½p to 785p, and NatWest Bank 18p to £10.16.

Safeway advanced 13p to 388p amid growing speculation that bid talks with rival Asda, 3½p better at 174½p, may be back on again.

British Aerospace soared 73p to £17.68 on the back of calls by various countries to draw up plans for restructuring the European defence industry.

National Grid dipped 7p to 293p ahead of the start of dealings on a when issued basis in Eneeriga, its telecom subsidiary, which was priced at 290p. The range of offers was pitched between 275p and 320p. At these levels, the business is valued at almost £900 million. The price touched a high for the day of 297½p before settling at 292½p, a premium of 2p.

Some negative comments from Goldman Sachs, the US securities house, left Anglo Wiggins 4½p lower at 167p and Rexam 13p at 277½p. It seems Goldman is worried about the impact the turmoil in the Far East may have on prospects.

Full-year results from Compass, up 4½p at 720½p, lived up to City expectations. Pre-tax profits of the independent caterer, headed by Francis Mackay, chief executive, jumped 20 per cent to £137.2



Francis Mackay, left, with Roger Matthews, managing director of Compass, up 4½p on good full-year figures

million with the help of recent acquisitions.

It was the first day of trading in Bovis Homes after being delisted from P&O, 3p better at 67½p. The shares were placed at 200p, but after briefly touching 204½p came off the boil to close with a 1p discount on the day at 199p.

The profits warning and dividend cut from Matthews

Clark left its shares nursing a loss of 46½p at 183½p and also affected others in the drinks sector with HP Bulmer down 6p at 407½p, while Merryell, which last week reached a bid approach, shed 2p at 63½p.

Where there is muck, there is brass as Waste Recycling discovered yesterday after the price climbed 13½p to 304½p.

It has paid £12 million to handle Cambridgeshire County Council's waste disposal operation.

As expected, Capital Radio suffered an early markdown, touching 472½p on learning that it had lost out to DJ Chris Evans in the battle for control of Richard Branson's Virgin Radio. The shares closed 2½p better at 502½p.

Wellman firmed 2½p to 40p. Word is, we should hear soon that the group has agreed an all-paper deal worth 50p a share after a recent bid approach.

Hambro's perked up 7p at 265p. It has been talking to Société Générale de Belgique about the sale of certain parts of its business. City speculators claim Royal Bank of Scotland, up 9½p at 77½p, is ready to bid with La Générale.

Christies International surged 24½p to 275p despite the breakdown in bid talks earlier this week. Brokers say another bidder may be stalking the shares.

Telcel continued to make headway, adding 5p at 84½p on mounting speculation that US West, its near 30 per cent shareholder, may be poised to launch an £800 million offer. Speculative buying also pushed Securix 16½p higher at 306½p. BT was 3½p harder at 477p.

Partners Holdings tumbled 7½p to 90p on the back of a profits warning. GILT-EDGED: Gains stretched to more than 2½p at the longer end, boding well for today's auction. Brokers reported buying all along the curve as the Bank of England prepared to offer £2 billion of Treasury 6½ per cent 2003.

Sentiment was enhanced by fresh evidence of a slowdown in retail spending and the unchanged inflation number.

In the futures pit, the March rise in the long gilt put on £1½ at £120½ as the total number of contracts completed more than doubled on the previous day's total of 71,000.

In longs, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 rose £2½ to £120½, while Treasury 10 per cent 2002 put on £1½ at £101½.

NEW YORK: Shares were down by midday after a rout in technology stocks rippled through the wider market, triggering profit-taking after the sharp climb of the past week. The Dow Jones industrial average stood at 8,098.65, a fall of 12.19 points.

### NEW YORK (midday)

Dow Jones 8098.65 (-12.19)  
S&P Composite 901.10 (-1.37)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average 10885.51 (+234.94)  
Hang Seng 11490.86 (-332.74)

Amsterdam: AEX Index 924.01 (-2.47)  
Frankfurt: DAX 3382.1 (-4.2)

Singapore: Straits Times 1774.22 (-19.41)

Brussels: CAC-40 3289.40 (-36.09)

Zurich: SMI 1343.30 (-1.88)

London: FTSE 100 5177.1 (-10.3)  
FTSE 250 3791.6 (-4.0)

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### COMPASS

## Compass finds its direction

AFTER the frenetic pace of deals of recent years, it may take some time to adjust to the idea that Compass can make very good progress without the help of more acquisitions. The truth is, the catering group has already established big businesses in its main markets of the UK, continental Europe and North America. Compass had sales of £1.8 billion in continental Europe last year and turned over £1.2 billion in North America — and that's before a full contribution from SHRM in France and DAKA International in the US, bought in July for a combined total of about £30 million.

Just integrating these companies should enable the group to produce better results. More importantly, Compass has built an international network that leaves it well placed to benefit from the continuing trend to

contract out the provision of food to employees. The market extends from companies to schools and from universities to hospitals and is already worth many billions of pounds.

For investors, one of the greatest attractions is the low demand on capital. Compass is forecast to start generating substantial amounts of cash. Even though it is now labouring under £877 million of debt, it is already contemplating buying in up to 10 per cent of its shares.

Pre-tax profits, up 20 per cent to £137.2 million last year, look set to approach £160 million this year, and almost £200 million next. The shares have been strong over the past few months and at 720½p stand on about 20 times forecasts of this year's earnings. Given the growth prospects, that looks fair value.

### Berkeley Group

BERKELEY GROUP is growing at such a lick that it will soon be Britain's first £100 million a year housebuilder. But while this year's and next year's profits look to be in the bag, more distant prospects are less certain.

With a £43.9 million profit on £274 million of first-half sales, Berkeley is now making a pre-tax margin of 16 per cent. As a comparison, Wilson Bowden manages about 12.5 per cent, while Barrat Developments runs along on under 10 per cent.

The specialist nature of Berkeley's developments, and the expense of the homes it offers, give it some protection from pressures felt more keenly in the rest of the housing market. But the rising land prices will eventually make themselves felt. The company is sanguine

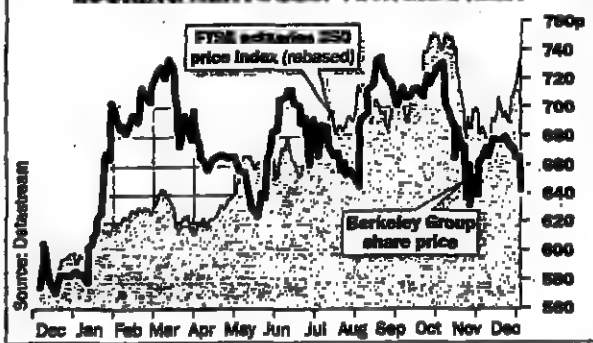
### about the potential loss of sales to Far Eastern buyers.

The problem will be to find new purchasers once the existing forward sales are completed.

Many of the Far Eastern sales are of London properties that are reckoned to be perhaps twice as profitable as sales outside London. If the UK economy slows next

year, the recent growth will be difficult to sustain. That the City's worries are so forward-looking is a testament to the fundamental strength of Berkeley's business. While they linger, it is difficult to see any near-term excitement in the shares. The company's track record should persuade existing investors to hang on to them.

### LOOKING NERVOUSLY TOWARDS ASIA



### Matthew Clark

PROFIT warnings have become a bad habit at Matthew Clark, whose latest excuse was poor trading in the run-up to Christmas. This, remember, just six months since Peter Alkens, the embattled chief executive, announced: "We now have a completely stable business."

Last year, there was a double whammy of competition from a group allied to the Chancellor's decision to slap a rise in duty on premium-strength ciders — both causing damage to sales of Clark brands such as Diamond White. Mr Alkens admitted that Diamond White volumes were up to 40 per cent down on November 1995, when the brand was acquired along with Taunton Cider. Just to add to the pain, consumers seem to be switching to drinking their premium cider from cans, where margins are less than half those on bottles.

The board has not sat on its

### hands. In the current year alone it expects to spend up to £10 million on advertising, matching a similar commitment from rival HP Bulmer.

It is also wisely investing its more resilient wholesale and non-cider businesses.

After yesterday's dive from 230p to 183½p, the shares stand at less than eight times this year's likely earnings. Cheap, but the board has a long way to go before it regains investors' confidence.

### Baronsmead

WITH Baronsmead falling to a £20.3 million bid from 31, one might suppose the small band of venture capital investment trusts is set to shrink further. 31 is buying a portfolio of shares at a 15 per cent discount to net asset value — so keen are investment trust shareholders to take a cash exit. With such apparent bargains on offer, what is stopping 31 or other predators gobbling up the rest?

Unfortunately, the issue

### is not quite so straightforward and consequently

shares in venture capital trusts are not such a good bet as they may seem. By nature, their holdings are unquoted and hard to sell quickly, so they do not attract the valuations which often arise open underperforming bonds. This is a sector for specialists. Despite the discount, 31's offer for Baronsmead will be a long way to go before it is ungenerous, given the risks involved in realising the investments.

Other trusts that have repeated Baronsmead's error of focusing on the smallest unquoted companies could also be vulnerable. However, investors may do better in the simpler, smaller company sector where share performance has been equally bad. A merger between the identical Moorgate and Smaller Company trusts, both managed by Martin Currie, would make sense.

EDITED BY PAUL DURMAN

### COMMODITIES

#### LIFFE

Dec 1099.1000 May 1156.1100  
Mar 1099.1000 May 1156.1100  
Jul 1099.1000 May 1156.1100  
Sep 1099.1000 May 1156.1100  
Nov 1099.1000 May 1156.1100  
Dec 1099.1000 May 1156.1100

#### RUSSIA COFFEE (R)

Dec 120.1000 May 120.1000  
Mar 120.1000 May 120.1000  
Jul 120.1000 May 120.1000  
Sep 120.1000 May 120.1000  
Nov 120.1000 May 120.1000  
Dec 120.1000 May 120.1000

#### WHITE SUGAR (R)

Dec 104.0000 May 104.0000  
Mar 104.0000 May 10



## High street retailers read the headline — and weep

It is never wise to take the pronouncements of industrial lobby groups at face value, whether they be those of the Confederation of British Industry or the British Retail Consortium. After all, it would not sit well with their members if they argued that manufacturing was coping well with the strength of the pound, or that consumers were showing few signs of interest rate fatigue. Nevertheless, the outright gloom from the BRC this week might just genuinely reflect the reality faced by many of Britain's retailers.

November was clearly a rotten month on the high street but it may or may not presage a bleak winter season. It is still quite possible that Christmas will lift off and leave egg on the faces of those retailers who are being panicked into December sales.

But what is important for economic policy is not the volume of sales but whether volumes are high enough to create inflationary pressures. The evidence suggests that, despite about £30 billion in windfall payments in the summer, there is precious little evidence of inflation coming from the high street. Yesterday's retail prices figures showed that consumer durable prices in November were actually 0.3 per cent down on a year ago. For all the talk of a revival in the housing market, household goods prices have risen by only 1.1 per cent.

In the context of the Chancellor's repeated expressions of concern about the next pay round, it is the headline rate, rather than the targeted underlying rate, which matters. One of the main culprits behind November's 3.7 per cent headline rate is housing, the perverse impact of higher mortgage rates as the Monetary Policy Committee has jacked up base rates. Other villains include tobacco, alcohol and petrol, all of which are subject to a continuing programme of duty increases. Foreign holidays are 8 per cent more expensive than a year ago and domestic holidays 4 per cent, testament to how many people have spent their windfalls on getting away.

Windfalls have repeatedly been invoked as the unwelcome guest at Britain's economic feast but there is little evidence that they have created broad pressure on prices. Holidays seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Part of the reason that prices have not generally been pushed higher is that windfall money has



been spent on imported goods. Robert Fleming Securities, which commissioned a detailed survey of windfall spending in August, estimates that the implied import content of supply attached to the consumption of windfalls is close to 40 per cent, roughly double that for all consumer spending in a typical year. Imports have, of course, been made much cheaper because of the strength of the pound. Most commentators now believe that the bulk of windfall spending has already happened. Therefore, it is probable that Britain

has negotiated this considerable one-off phenomenon without paying an inflationary price. The coincidence of windfalls and a surging pound was lucky (for policymakers at least) but there is far more to the lack of price pressure on the high street than this.

The managing director of a company which acts as agent to importers of goods into Britain's high streets believes that November's awful showing had nothing to do with higher interest rates. He says that consumers boycotted the shops last month simply because they are waiting for retailers to panic into sales. The British consumer has become a master player of chicken with the retailer, and retail finances are ghastly as a result. Our MD says that he has £2 million of postdated cheques from British retail customers, panicked into early sales, ruining their margins in the process. Many are unable to pay for their stock until January and beyond.

To the extent that the MD's pile of cheques has got bigger each year, the

squeeze on prices in the high street would appear to have become worse as the economic recovery has lengthened, hardly evidence of an inflationary consumer boom. On top of this, it seems clear that the economy is set to slow quite sharply. The impact of monetary tightening will continue to be felt well into next year and fiscal policy will be tight. Planned public spending is virtually flat and the burden of taxation will increase with rising council taxes and excise duties on tobacco and petrol and a further cut in mortgage tax relief.

The Treasury's prediction that inflation will rise next year is therefore very odd. The only viable theory to explain why the Chancellor is so much more pessimistic on this score than the Bank of England is that he wants to get the slowdown over with as soon as possible so that the upswing coincides with the next election. If one puts aside such an unworthy thought for a moment, it is possible that the Chancellor is genuinely worried about the spring wage round. Rather than hope that the Bank of England will continue raising rates, perhaps his next eye-catching reform should be the abolition of the headline rate of inflation. Forcing firms to concentrate on the underlying rate, only a smidgeon above target, would do wonders for his nerves.

## Mzi poised to strike radical blow for JCI

Jason Nissé on a deal that could also reshape Lonrho's fortunes

Twelve years in prison is not the usual qualification for a captain of industry. But Mzi Khumalo's time on Robben Island sealed his friendship with Nelson Mandela and brought him to the forefront of the black empowerment movement within South African business.

However, the poor performance of JCI, the mining group he chairs, has cast a shadow over his career and the whole movement, which is being nicknamed "black impoverishment" in Johannesburg because cynics feel it was a way of selling overpriced assets to naive business leaders.

Now, after more than six months of courtship, Khumalo is close to consummating a deal that could transform not only JCI but one of the UK's most controversial and misunderstood companies, Lonrho. Originally it was going to be a full-scale merger but in

It will be a business in better shape than most of South Africa's mining interest

If the deal succeeds, Sir John, who has since become convinced of Khumalo's pedigree through months of negotiations, wants to appoint the JCI chairman to the Lonrho board. Lonrho sources are keen to play down suggestions that Khumalo might succeed Sir John but anything less than deputy chairman would bring accusations of tokenism in South Africa.

By the time Khumalo comes on board Lonrho will be a South African mining company largely with a London quote. In the next few months Lonrho will conclude the sale of Princess Hotels for at least £250 million. The Dutton-Forsyth motor dealer group — which includes Jack Barclay, Britain's leading seller of Rolls-Royces — is expected to be sold to a management buyout early next year, releasing about £100 million.

Then a de-merger of the trading company is due around April, creating a group with interests in agriculture and motors that will be one of the few pure African investments traded on the London market.

Lonrho Mining will own 61 per cent of Dukler, which is due to buy JCI's coal business and 73 per cent of the platinum mining operation, and 38 per cent of Ashanti, the Ghanaian gold mine that is the world's cheapest gold producer. It will be able to buy in and cancel the 28 per cent stake that has passed from Tiny Rowland to Dieter Bock to Anglo-American and finally to JCI. Khumalo has talked about "turning this company around", but in truth it will be a business in a great better shape than most of the rest of the South African mining interest.

Consummating the purchase of JCI now looks like a win-win situation for Lonrho and Khumalo. By pinning its colours to the black empowerment movement, Lonrho will be able to keep the South African conglomerate Anglo-American and Genor at arm's length and Khumalo will be able to take the credit for the success of a business he had little to do with creating.

## Aerospace industry consolidation cleared for take-off in Europe

Adam Jones says Airbus could be a template for the future of the industry



The new Airbus A3XX is regarded as a fitting commercial flagship for the European aerospace industry

Airbus Industrie is particularly proud of its planned A3XX. The £5 billion project, if it gets built, will be the largest commercial aircraft in the world, with maximum capacity likely to be greater than 800 people on certain "sardine" routes, such as Japanese short-haul flights.

Visitors to the Airbus headquarters in Toulouse, France, are shown a seductive promotional video where passengers stroll along improbably long aisles, on their way to the bar or the gymnasium.

They loiter contentedly at the foot of a staircase, amid jugglers, kissing couples and an atmosphere of minimalist cool. It is the kind of aircraft for which even the clichés have been designed by Sir Terence Conran or Philippe Starck.

The preoccupation of Airbus with size and efficiency makes the A3XX, due to be in service in 2003, a fitting commercial flagship for the European aerospace industry.

If the A3XX is the future of jumbo jets, then the structure created by Airbus once it is transformed into a real company could well be a template for the future of the European defence and aerospace industries.

Yesterday's call by the Governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom for an acceleration to the consolidation in the industries had a simple underlying message.

They feel that growing bigger is not just an option for the European national

champions — both in aerospace and defence electronics — it is the only option, given the size of the competitors being formed by alliances in the US, such as the merger of Boeing and McDonnell Douglas, and the need for efficiencies of scale as post-Cold War defence budgets shrink further.

Although George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, has already told the United Kingdom companies to "rationalise or die", it was a significant to have it said out so clearly by the French and German Governments.

It softens the disappointment that was felt when France chose to position Thomson-CSF, the defence electronics group which it part-owns, as the hub of a new French defence grouping. Instead of opening the door to non-French companies such as GEC of the United Kingdom.

It also sends out a positive signal for the restructuring of Airbus Industrie into a single company, due to take place in 1999.

The success of Airbus to date has been in spite of its unwieldy structure. It is a consortium, 37.9 per cent owned by Aerospatiale of France and Dasa of

Germany — the original Airbus visionaries. British Aerospace holds 20 per cent, with Casa of Spain owning the remaining 4.2 per cent.

Because of the sensitivities of certain participants, it publishes no overall accounts, and analysts are forced to try to piece together composite information from the figures that the listed companies allow to escape.

There are widespread complaints that the structure hides the differing levels of efficiency among the partners, with British Aerospace's wing-making function

seen as being particularly sleek and profitable. These inequalities make it difficult to decide who should own how much of the new company.

Once Airbus is restructured, the French, German and UK partners will be under pressure to add their integrated defence aerospace activities, making one European aerospace company. Germany and France have said that this is what they want. Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, was less forward at yesterday's press conference,

saying that it is up to the industry to come up with its own decision.

One way by which a single European aerospace company could be built is making the Eurofighter consortium — comprising British Aerospace, Dasa, Casa and Alenia of Italy — into a single company in the same fashion as the Airbus restructuring. The partners' non-Eurofighter defence activities could be injected into the new company, added to Dassault of France, and the whole could then be merged with Airbus.

The biggest sticking points are likely to be the difficulty of making workers redundant in France and Germany, where unemployment levels are high.

One analyst said yesterday: "I'd like to be euphoric but I think there are lots of problems. There's a big gap between the wish and the reality." He pointed to an aerospace joint venture between TI, the UK engineer, and Snecma of France, where profit margins are still weaker than competitors. He blamed this on the difficulty of shedding French staff.

Dilution of its existing interests would damage



Beckett: industry must come up with its own decision

## Cheap votes

AN UNEXPECTED casualty of this week's elections in the City is Dennis Deiderfeld, and there will be few tears shed at Guildhall at his departure. Deiderfeld is an outspoken critic of the outmoded system of franchise there, and after two years as common councillor at the Ward of Farringdon Without he is now himself without. His defeat was a narrow one, 31 votes short at 219.



"You can assure the shareholders we're doing everything we can"

ket traders, after a disagreement with one of them. Of the successful 12 councillors at Farringdon, eight are either traders or their nominees. Under the City franchise it is perfectly possible to buy votes by acquiring a "tenancy at will", a sub-lease on a small patch of the Square Mile. This the traders have been doing, and in other wards too, I am told.

Another result was the election, after just one year, of Derek Davis from the Ward of Cheap. Again there is more at work here than local democracy. As I reported yesterday, five candidates competed for four seats at Cheap. The curious thing is that all five are identified with the same small City cabal, having their tenancies at the Midland's head office in Poultry. Joe Byllam-Barnes, a familiar figure in City circles and part of the old guard, has effectively carried out a putsch against his mate Davis by standing against him. It is a strange world and once it is all properly reformed, in a funny way I shall miss it.

UT RING Julian Metcalfe, who runs the excellent Pret à Manger sandwich chain, to



ask whether this is the best time to be rolling out his latest recipe, steak and chips. "Oh God. Ooh...," says Metcalfe, then pulls himself together. The meat is all Aberdeen Angus fillet sourced from one Scottish farm. "It's selling incredibly well."

I am not surprised. Choice beef was as thin on the ground round my way at the weekend as Teletubbies dolls, and as fought over. Good luck to Pret for giving people what they want rather than what the health police think we should be allowed.

### Hot air

THE failure of Richard Branson's latest round-the-

world balloon attempt has left them hanging on at Telephone Information Services, which was to have operated a phone line providing regular updates during the 15 day-plus trip. Until the balloon drifted off into the stratosphere, Roger Farrow, business development manager at TIS, learnt of the accident on the news but heard nothing from Marra-kech. "Not a lot appears to have happened in terms of updating," he says lugubriously.

### Offside

THIS must be the most unusual reason yet. Caspian, owner of Leeds United, is postponing figures until Tuesday. They were due this week, but "in the light of the tragic death of Billy Bremner, the announcement will be delayed as a mark of respect", the company said. "We thought it would play very badly in Leeds," said an insider.

AS WE survey the unedifying gladiatorial contest between SBC and UBS to decide who keeps their jobs, a colleague reminds me of an old Monty Python sketch featuring two pantomime horses. And a merchant banker. "In the grand traditions of British merchant banking, you will fight to the death," John

Cleese tells the pantomime horses. And they do. Rather prescient, really.

### General buy

I SEE another BTR director is putting his money where his mouth is and buying the shares. Robert Bauman, and I never knew his middle name was Patten, has bought 300,000, a day after Ian Strachan, chief executive, bought 70,000. BTR shares yesterday were no more impressed by Bauman's gesture. They closed a penny lower.

MARTIN WALLER



Robert Bauman has put his money where his mouth is by buying BTR shares

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# The race for compliance

Nigel Powell analyses the bug and asks: what does compliance mean?

The millennium bug is the direct result of computer programmers trying to save their employers money. Back in the early days of computers, when systems were big enough to fill a room, programmers were under acute pressure to save space, because space was expensive.

All sorts of methods were used, and one of them involved cutting back date calculations in programs to just six numbers. Instead of a database program having to hold, for example, a full 21/07/1947, the program was written to understand 21/07/47. It may not seem like a big saving, but every bit counted when bytes cost thousands of dollars each, since each program (for example a pensions calculator) could contain millions of dates relating to millions of data records.

The practice caught on, and from that day to the recent past most computer programmers followed the same space-saving tradition, even when the cost constraints on space eased as computers became cheaper.

Now these very same saved bytes have come home to roost, and the result is potential chaos. On January 1, 2000 all of the old programs which have not been fixed will become completely confused, because to them the date will be 01/01/00, an impossible date to calculate.

Not only computer programs were penny pinched in this way either. Manufacturers of just about every product which contained a micro-processor chip also made use of the convention, and so we are now faced with the possibility of lifts, security systems, cars, planes, safes and even traffic lights failing on the fateful day.

The terror of the millennium bug lies in the fact that no one knows how widespread it is. Hence the race to fix the errant

systems, to make them "compliant" with the year 2000. But what does "compliance" entail?

The British Standards Institution has produced what is probably the definitive statement of compliance. Committee BDD/11-3 has issued the following DISC PD 2000-1 Definition of Year 2000 Conformity Requirements.

"Year 2000 conformity shall mean that neither performance nor functionality is affected by dates prior to, during and after the Year 2000. In particular:

Rule 1 — No value for current date will cause any interruption in operation.

Rule 2 — Date-based functionality must be have consistently for dates prior to, during and after Year 2000.

Rule 3 — In all interfaces and data storage, the century in any date must be specified either explicitly or by unambiguous algorithms or inferencing rules.

Rule 4 — Year 2000 must be recognised

as a leap year."

The final rule offers another twist to the tale: some programs may not recognise the leap year. Indeed, several other risk scenarios involving dates and microchips have appeared under the millennium bug microscope.

There is a widespread (though mostly unconfirmed) belief that some programmers have failed to build in safeguards for the date 9/9/99. Some computer software, in particular UNIX based programs, may fail on January 18, 2038 because of a limitation in the design of a widely used programming language function. And IBM-compatible PCs may revert to January 4 1980, the birthdate of DOS, as the millennium dawns.

● The BSI-DISC (British Standards Institute): 0181 996 7000.

● Two useful web sites: <http://www.weblaw.co.uk> <http://www.year2000.com/>.

Tony Dawe introduces a four-page special report on the computer danger facing industry and Government



THE task of tackling a numbers problem which affects computer systems seems very simple to non-technical people in this highly scientific

age. The fact that many systems which record the year with two digits might be confused when 99 is replaced by 00 at midnight on December 31, 1999, has tended, therefore, to be dismissed as a curable hiccup by the majority of the population, including leaders of industry and Government.

As the date moves nearer, however, the potential for crisis has become more apparent, sparking a wave of announcements by the Government and urgent board meetings in companies which have failed to plan for the so-called "millennium timebomb".

Many computer experts now believe that several aspects of our everyday lives, from making telephone calls to using credit cards, may be affected and that the consequences for Government and industry are alarming. Estimates vary hugely, but a conservative guess at the global cost of handling this problem is £400 billion. In Britain alone it is put at £30 billion.

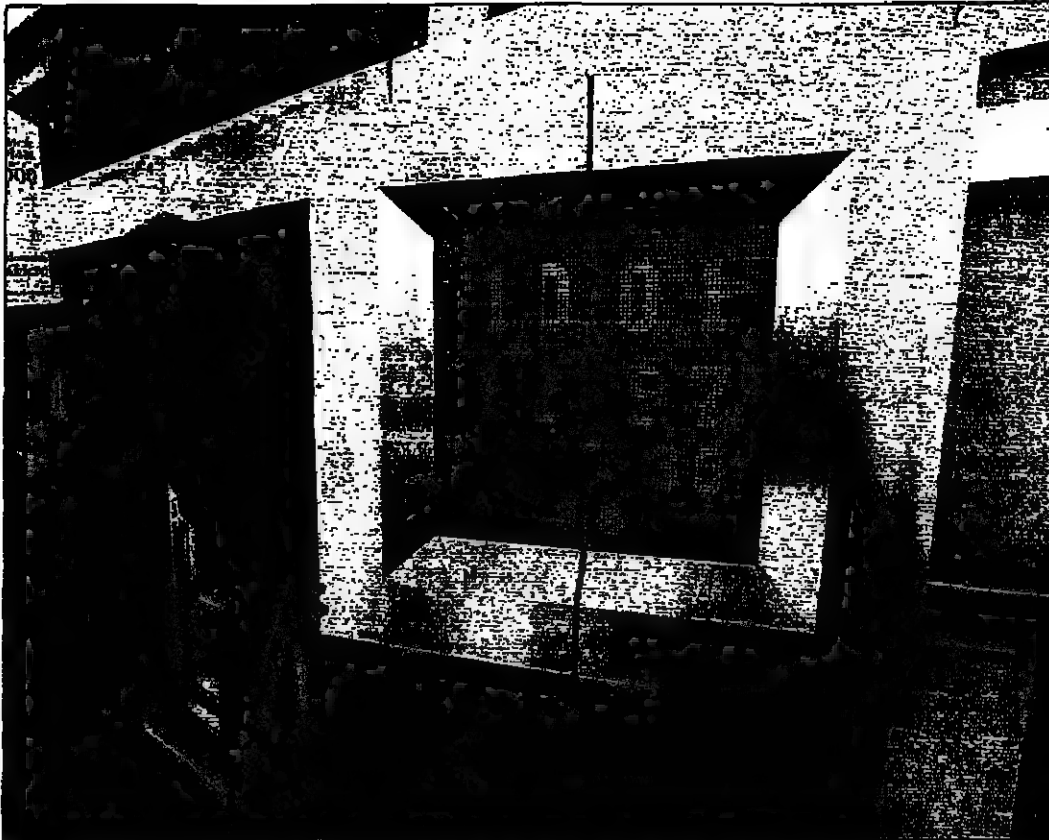
"There is a general awareness of the problem now, but what causes anxiety is the increasing amount of data which shows that companies are not taking the action they need to remedy it," says Barbara Roche, the Trade and Industry Minister. "There is still time to overcome the problem, but they must act now."

The data continues to pour out of research departments. A report by the PA Consulting Group last week found that almost half of the 1,000 organisations surveyed worldwide do not yet have a formal millennium programme in place and only 55 per cent of senior managers are fully aware of the implications.

A study by Cap Gemini, the European computer services and consulting company, suggests that one in ten organisations will fail to meet the deadline for converting their systems to handle dates after December 1999. Many of them are large companies, and the effect of missing the deadline could put 29 per cent of gross domestic product at risk.

Alan Langlands, chief executive of the National Health Service, has described the problem as "the highest non-clinical priority" in the service.

The Government has been criticised by Robin Guernier, the head of Taskforce 2000, for failing to take the issue seriously enough, and has



Andrew Loftus, of Accurist, with the Greenwich digital clock, which will count down to the millennium, then switch to count the first thousand days. "And yes," he says, "it is millennium compliant"

## Countdown to a digital disaster

also been accused of being unprepared by Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrats' Treasury spokesman.

He has claimed that only three out of 16 departments are on course to sort out the problem and that little of the money committed to it has been spent.

Ministers have responded by saying that Tony Blair recently assured the Cabinet that Whitehall was ready to cope with the crisis and that £370 million has been earmarked for defusing the timebomb.

The crucial issue for executives — and government ministers — is to assess the scale of the problem affecting them, according to Don Cruickshank, the telecoms regulator who was recently appointed to

chair Action 2000. "They must then decide how much money and talent will have to be redirected from research and development into solving the millennium problem," he says. "Some companies may see

**'Missing the deadline could put 29 per cent of gross domestic product at risk'**

this as an opportunity to update equipment, instead of spending money on reprogramming."

This is the key decision for men and women in company boardrooms. Do they try to get by with patching their systems with the

increasing number of "repair tools" coming onto the market or do they succumb to pressure from hardware and software houses to add value to the project by upgrading their systems?

Nicholas Birtles, president of Consteller, which has developed its own year 2000 compliant data management system, has no doubts. "Companies with the largest year 2000 problems are those which have many 'heritage' systems running on mainframe machines," he says. "These systems are a minefield of year 2000 bombs waiting to explode."

"Many organisations will find converting existing applications to support year 2000 is a great deal more complex than they anticipated.

ed. There is, however, a much simpler and more effective strategy: get off legacy systems as quickly as possible and stop pouring good money after bad."

Marc Swiecki, Hewlett Packard's year 2000 manager for Europe, says: "Companies are going to be incurring a fair amount of cost without increased efficiency and incremental growth. But the year 2000 needs to be seen as an opportunity."

"For companies with legacy applications, this is the chance to adopt new applications that are not only going to be year 2000 compliant but add value to the business. The key message is that the longer they wait the more difficult it will be and fewer options will be available."

Paul Robertshaw of SAP, the software house which has developed the R/3 system to counter millennium "bugs" and operate into the new century, adds that replacing applications has several advantages. It will be more competitive and reliable, may be cheaper in the long term and easier for IT managers to sell to their directors because of the added value.

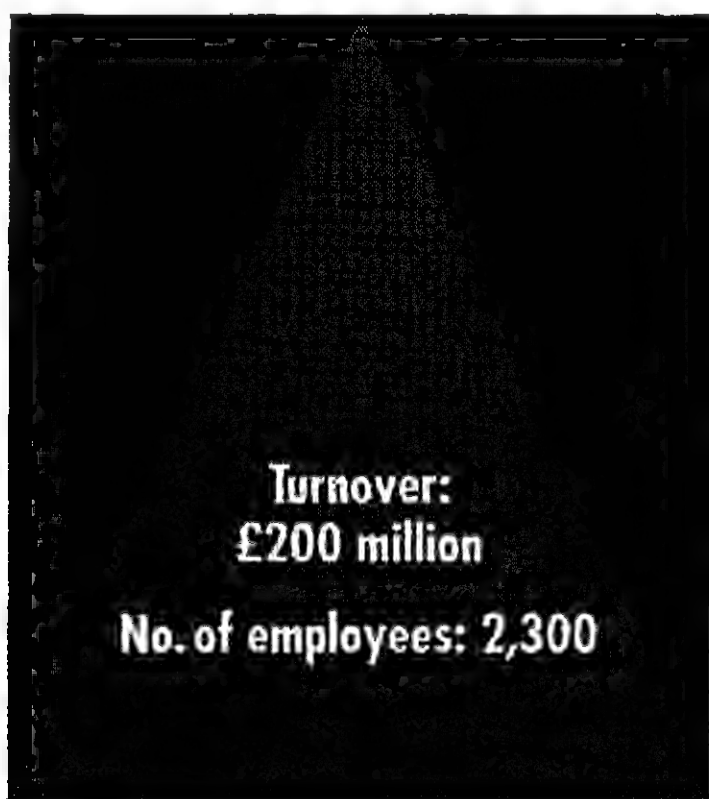
A detailed guide to the year 2000 by Bloor Research warns, however, of the risks of upgrading applications. "Many tools are being promoted on the basis that they will deliver some added value above and beyond helping to solve the year 2000 problem, but adding value must be treated with caution and not be allowed to dilute the objectives," concludes Andrew Hammett, the report's author.

"We believe that to burden a year 2000 project with these additional unnecessary complexities will significantly increase the risk of failing to deliver its primary objectives," says Mr Hammett.

The guide also provides advice for companies which have yet to tackle the millennium issue. It advises IT managers to begin by provoking awareness of the problem to obtain sufficient funds for an initial study. This should justify a budget for a thorough investigation. It also recommends appointing a central person or small team to gather and disseminate information to project teams in different departments.

"If you're just starting now and are a large organisation, you are almost certainly going to have to practice triage," says Ian Hugo, editor of *Millennium Watch*, in a foreword to the guide.

"That means placing a priority on fixing different applications according to their importance to the organisation and according also to what applications will fail first."



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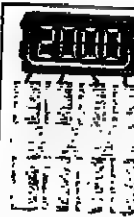
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# It's out with the old, and in with the new

Tony Dawe on one international firm that updated its entire network



**WHEN** Graham Eastwood joined GEC-Plessey Semiconductors three years ago he was faced with an IT manager's nightmare. The company, based in Swindon, had been formed from four chip makers, including Ferranti and Marconi, and operated four separate factories in England plus sales and design centres worldwide, all with different and incompatible computer systems.

As he investigated an integration programme, Mr Eastwood, the information systems executive, discovered his company was using more than 100 applications susceptible to the millennium bug, including sales, finance and planning programmes. Fixing the problem was almost impossible because most of the applications had been modified to GEC-Plessey's specifications.

## CASE STUDY

"Our year 2000 problem was completely daunting," he says. "It soon became apparent that it would be a futile use of time, effort and money to patch the applications and of no value to the company. The sensible solution was to combine the two issues and put investment money into something which would benefit us beyond the year 2000."

GEC-Plessey chose the R/3 system from SAP (UK) to replace most of its existing systems in sales and distribution, materials management, finance, costing and production planning. It decided to introduce them all at the same time in a "big bang" approach as 650 of the company's 2,300 employees would be using the system.

The cost was in "the low millions", according to Mr Eastwood, but selling the idea to his board was not as difficult as he had anticipated. The company has an annual turnover of around £200 million.

"Our bid for the investment was based on the improvement it would bring in business productivity," Mr Eastwood says.

"We also advised that the year 2000 problem was a worrying issue: that the scope of the problem was not fully known, but that it would affect us. Even at that time, in 1995, it was relevant because both the finance and marketing departments were engaged in five-year projections."

GEC-Plessey then looked for the ideal platform on which to run the SAP system. The company operated individual mainframes and servers at each site, but chose an integrated system and plumped for Hewlett Packard, which meant a new partner and new technology for the company.

"The Hewlett Packard equipment has brought peace of mind and spared us from wrestling with computer problems when we should be concentrating on our main task of providing chips," Mr Eastwood adds.

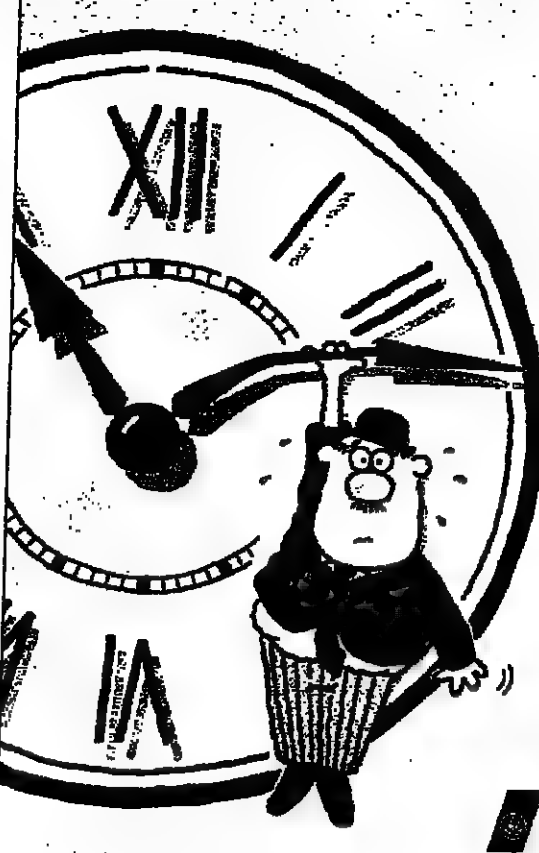
The company went live with the SAP system on July 15 this year and Mr Eastwood is convinced that the decision was right.

Peter Robertshaw, SAP product manager, says: "This enormous project was unusual in that all elements of the IT infrastructure were replaced across the organisation at the same time. GEC-Plessey now has a brand new system in which it can be confident."

**'We had to benefit beyond the year 2000'**

## DON'T HANG AROUND

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Revenue

## Tax code cracker

### CASE STUDY

HECTOR the inspector (left) was busy this year prompting us to return our tax forms, but the Inland Revenue can't process them without computers, and so the millennium bug poses a huge challenge (Nigel Powell writes). Mark Sudan, head of the Revenue's £26 million Year 2000 (Y2K) project, describes it as a mammoth undertaking. "But we are bang on track with our timings and costs," he says.

In July 1994 the Revenue awarded a ten-year outsourcing contract under which the EDS consultancy took responsibility for the compliance of all Revenue computing systems. The hardware includes ICL and IBM mainframes in data centres at Cumbernauld, Wokingham and Shipley which service 44,000 users across the UK, as well as several UNIX systems and 45,000 PCs running Windows software.

EDS reported early last year on the scope of the project, Mr Sudan says. "So we were able to give senior management an idea of the scale of the problem. We got their approval fairly quickly, which was essential."

The last tests in the £26 million project are scheduled for the end of 1999. By then 30,000 man days of work involving some 900 staff will have gone into examining, fixing and testing 250 computer systems.

The team benefited by starting with a pilot project which highlighted problem areas. Mr Sudan's advice? Don't be side-tracked by the discovery of unrelated bugs in the code: log them and come back to them later.

## Vulnerable companies face share markdown

Analysts are questioning stock values and the effect of the millennium, writes Lindsay Nicolle

SHARE prices could be in for some spectacular mood swings next year as forecasts persist that lack of year 2000 compliance could materially affect companies during the run-up to the millennium.

Many firms have been shy of putting a public figure on their vulnerability to the bug, but there are exceptions. Safeway estimates the cost of adjusting its computers at about £5 million over two years. The Royal Bank of Scotland expects to spend nearly £30 million on remodelling its software. NatWest Bank says the problem will cost about 3 per cent of its IT budget until 2000.

Some IT companies are dismissive. Rockwell, the American defence firm, said the bug is taking 25 to 30 per cent less time and money than it had expected. Bill Gates, of Microsoft, has called it "little more than a headache". But Reuters, the online information company, worried the City last month by refusing to put a figure on the cost of the problem.

The issue is beginning to affect takeovers. Last week a \$650 million Dutch privatisation collapsed when Getronics, the IT company bidding for Roccade, the state computer services agency, said legal worries about the bug made it too risky to proceed.

In the UK analysts are starting to look for ways of measuring year 2000 compliance in company valuations. But there is as yet no recognised benchmark, chiefly because it is so difficult to assess a company's vulnerability where a complex supply chain is involved.

"One indicator is the seniority of the individual charged with managing the compliance process," says David Clayton, an IT stockbroker analyst at BZW. "But this is far from adequate."

In the US the Securities and Exchange Commission has addressed the problem by issuing guidelines clarifying

those conditions where information concerning the year 2000 must be disclosed in documents it then retains. In Britain companies are obliged to declare anything in their accounts, which they think could materially affect their share price, but there is no compulsory requirement to mention year 2000 projects.

Murmurs can now be heard from auditors, who may start qualifying accounts by late 1998, as well as from investors. "We're very concerned about the state of preparedness of British industry," says Mike Young, assistant director of the British Bankers' Association (BBA). "There hasn't yet been much comment from City analysts but we think that will happen next year. Businesses will increasingly find a whole range of people asking more pointed questions about their state of preparedness. Sensible companies should already be talking to analysts about what they're doing."

The BBA will launch what it calls a national checklist early next year, to help firms to self-assess their year 2000 readiness in terms of their supply chain. Banks may use it as a yardstick for loans, especially to medium-sized companies. Jane Burns, ICL's year 2000 programme marketing manager, says: "It's got to affect share prices."

The Institutional Fund Manager's Association also expects share prices to move as professionals become more aware of the significance of year 2000 compliance. Julian Le Fanu, the deputy director general, says: "Pressure will be put on firms to explain themselves, given that there is an obligation among companies to make appropriate provision in their accounts for known liabilities. As that happens, those firms which look as if they will vaporise at the year 2000 will find their share prices affected."

● The author is Editor of Corporate Networks.

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Jane Burns: shares



Mike Young: concerned



## Pitfalls of the IT bonus boom

EMPLOYERS are creating more problems in addition to the year 2000 systems issue by offering big bonuses to persuade computer staff to see them through the program conversion work.

This emerges from separate studies which show that the finance and retail sectors in particular are now desperate enough to offer bonuses of up to 100 per cent of salary — even though such schemes are found to create resentment among other staff.

More than a fifth of organisations questioned by MCG Consulting Group, a specialist in incentive schemes, are already offering bonuses to IT staff, and another third are considering such initiatives. Almost 15 per cent have introduced other schemes, such as extra holidays, share options, flexible hours, working from home and six-monthly reviews of pay.

More than 35 per cent of those with bonus schemes are offering to pay salary twice over, typically in the summer of 2000 to ensure that people see the job through.

Some companies are starting to pay bonuses immediately. Banks in the City are leading the way, largely because bonuses are common in other departments, and competition for staff is intense.

But employers in other fields are introducing such schemes with "considerable reluctance", according to MCG partner Derek Burn. "One problem is that not all organisations operate in a bonus culture," he says. "Introducing such a scheme is seen as a major change — and doing so for a single group of staff can be divisive."

This view is endorsed by separate research by the Institute of Employment Studies. "Our work suggests that companies paying substantial bonuses could be wasting their money," says researcher Stephen Bevan. "They inflate pay. They cause resentment among others, who see that they are not considered vital enough or that they have not made enough fuss, compared with others."

Mr Bevan says bonuses should be used as a last resort — and that employers should look at other ways of keeping computer staff. "IT professionals are seen as a breed apart and immune to many traditional approaches," he says.

JOHN KAVANAGH

Programmers who know ancient computer languages are in demand, says Tony Dawe



RETIRED computer programmers and those who have left work to bring up families are finding themselves with a price on their heads as

computer companies and software houses struggle to recruit staff to tackle the millennium time bomb.

Technicians conversant with such ancient computer languages as Assembler and Cobol can expect rates of pay that would have been beyond their wildest dreams when they were first writing programs in these languages more than 20 years ago.

As well as trying to lure former staff off the golf course and away from coffee mornings, the industry is also trying to attract more graduates and to introduce specific training schemes.

The demand for staff to unravel millions of lines of code — and to work on replacement systems that many businesses may choose to adopt instead — will also mean big bonuses for technicians who promise to stay with companies badly affected by the "bug".

Chris Pearce, managing director of the National Computing Centre, an independent IT services group, says: "Languages such as Cobol are not used now, but some systems are still operating on it with the codes messed by extra bits that have been tacked on."

Cobol (commercial or business-oriented language), was widely used in programs written in the Seventies and Eighties, but the oldest applications were developed using Assembler, a low-level language capable of addressing fields by many means.

The year 2000 problem will be particularly difficult to detect and fix automatically in Assembler applications, yet most mainframes still have some Assembler code to check, which may have to be done manually. The problem will also be difficult to trace in codes written in the PL/I language favoured on IBM mainframes.

Leading the campaign to recruit a "Dad's Army" of workers is ICL, the computer services company, which wants to create an "auxiliary workforce" to help its customers to iron out the millennium bug. The company is contacting 300 staff who retired at the ages of between 55 and 65, and the initial response suggests that half will be happy to take up the challenge. Some women who had left the company to bring up families have also agreed to rejoin ICL.

They can choose to work as many



Maebh O'Connor and Lesley Foley of PKS are among those trying to solve the millennium problem

## Old campaigners answer the call

hours as they like and, provided they have their own personal computers, will receive "homework packages" containing a disk with the client's faulty data.

In America, Oregon state has launched a recruitment drive for a similar "Dad's Army" and is proposing a change in benefit and tax laws to encourage people to come back to work.

At the opposite end of the employment scale, the 2000 problem also spells good news for graduates. The IT industry was suffering from a skills shortage even before the demands of the date change issue became apparent, and is now eager to recruit students with degrees in non-scientific subjects.

Cap Gemini, the European computer services and consulting company, plans to increase the number of graduates it hires to more than

200 a year and is prepared to take those with degrees in history and geography as well as computer science. The company has established a training academy to turn students into fully fledged fee-earning employees and has also introduced one-year placement schemes for undergraduates. These provide a taste of real life at the company for undergraduates and, for its part, Cap Gemini treats the students like real employees and subjects them to formal performance reviews and objectives.

Irish graduates are also being targeted by PKS Systems Integration, a US company that has recently set up in Limerick. It is recruiting and training graduates as systems analysts to sort out faulty lines of customers' codes sent down a telephone line from PKS's Omaha headquarters and downloaded in Limerick.

The shortage of skilled people and the high fees commanded by those who are qualified are also encouraging software suppliers to find ways of producing their own people. SAP of the UK has set up an academy to train hundreds every year in the skills needed to implement the company's R/3 business system, which has been year 2000-compliant since 1992.

Petra Frenzel, the managing director of SAP, says: "We decided to make training a priority as we are only too aware that the success of our products depends on the quality of the people who put them in place."

"Last year we trained more than 400 people to implement R/3 and this year we aim to make it more than 1,000, a reflection of our commitment to helping business to overcome the hurdles of the next few years."

## At zero hour

When the clock strikes the Nineties' last midnight, how could it affect your life?

A doomsday scenario has been created by some experts around the difficulties which the millennium date change could pose to the world's computers. Airlines could crash, weapons systems go haywire and consumerism collapse as credit cards and phone calls fail to function, Tony Dawe writes.

Leaders of threatened industries have dismissed the predicted disasters as hype by companies likely to benefit from fears about the 2000 bug. There may, however, be truth in some millennium myths.

This is what might happen on and around midnight on December 31, 1999:

● **AIRLINES:** Some air traffic control systems might close down and navigation equipment go berserk when the

computers controlling them fail to cope when the year, registered in their microchips, moves from 99 to 00. Tim Goodyear, head of the International Air Transport Association's year 2000 project, who also works for KLM, has said that his airline will not operate certain services on January 1, 2000, unless suppliers have guaranteed that all equipment is year 2000 compliant.

● **BANKING:** Financial markets could be seriously disrupted and banks and finance houses are so concerned that Morgan Stanley, for example, is spending £45m on its "biggest ever IT project, involving 400 man-years of work". Merrill Lynch has committed £125m to creating a 100-strong team to find, examine and, if necessary, correct its 170 million lines of code.

All this expense and effort should save the City and Wall Street from collapse, but prudent investors might steer clear of major decisions for several days either side of January 1.

● **CREDIT CARDS:** The millennium could start disastrously for most of us if this staple of modern life fails. The good news is that Barclays Bank has started issuing cards with 00

expiry dates and, for the most part, they have worked. Problems have occurred with a few retailers whose tills have not been modified. But American Express is delaying the issue of cards for 2000 until the vast majority of outlets in Europe and the rest of the world can cope.

● **DEFENCE:** Whitehall and the Pentagon have expressed fears about the ability of weapons and monitoring systems to absorb the date change, but the British and US governments are spending a small fortune in trying to ensure the world's safety.

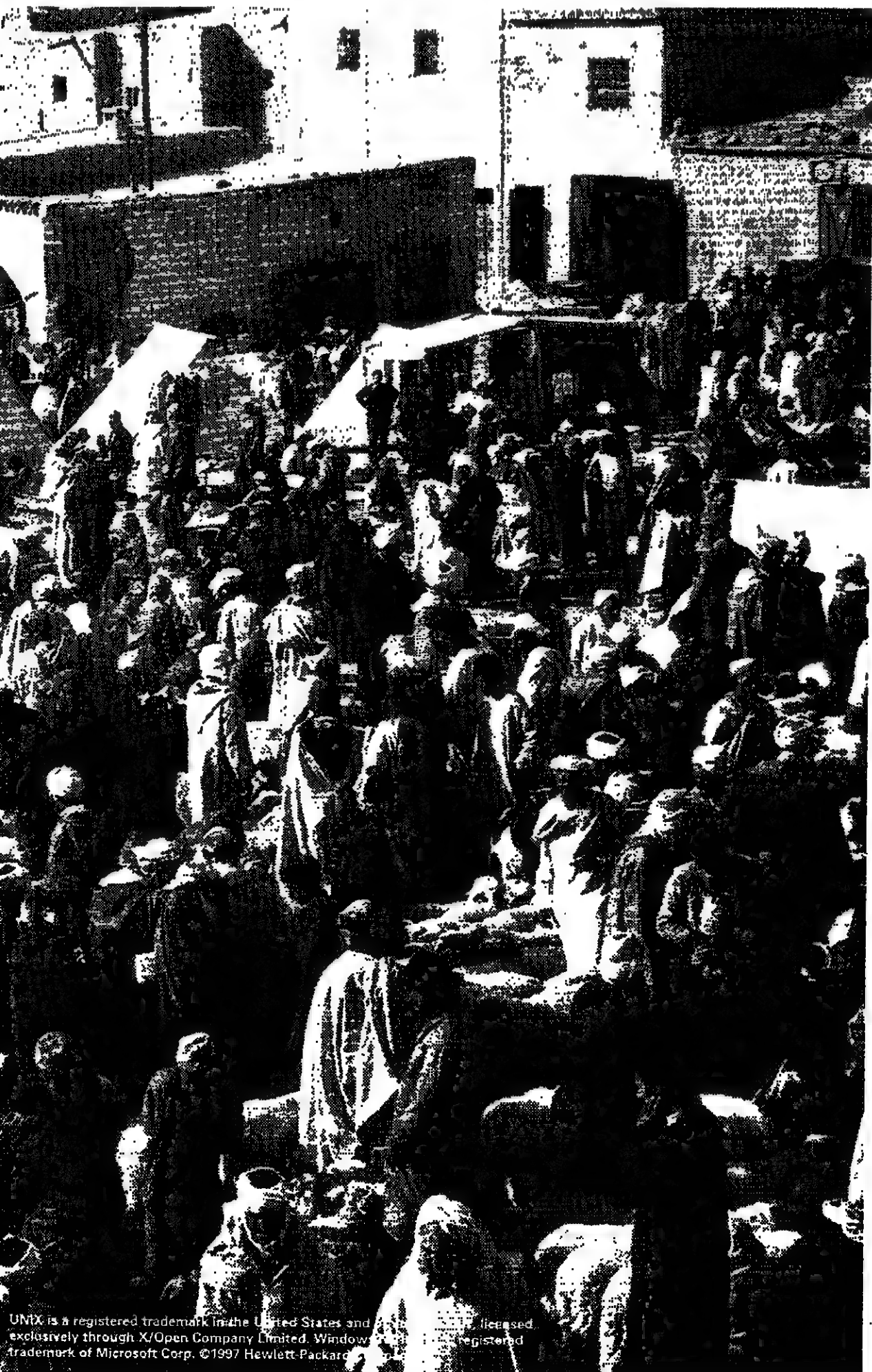
● **HEALTH:** Computerised medical equipment from heart pumps to monitors could be affected; air conditioning in operating theatres could cease; lifts essential for moving incapacitated patients could stop and administrative systems, including those used to recall patients for checks and waiting lists, could collapse.

A programme for tackling the crisis in the NHS has finally been established, but doubts remain about whether the cash-strapped service will be able to cope and whether GP practices will be aware that some of their equipment could be vulnerable.

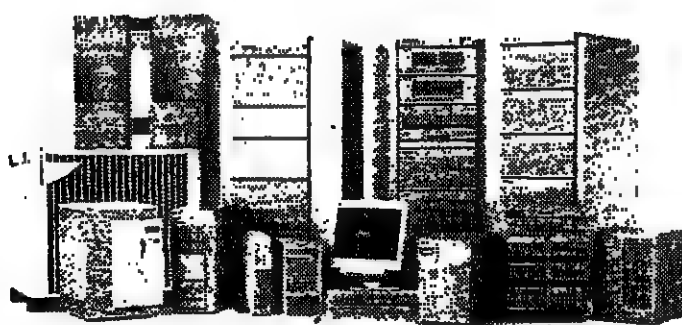
● **SAFETY AT WORK:** The Health and Safety Executive has warned that the millennium time bomb poses a significant threat to safety. Industrial robots could march out of control and machine guards fail to operate. Most large companies are tackling the issue, but small and medium-sized companies may lack the in-house expertise to deal with the problem.

● **TELEPHONES:** International calls are most at risk. BT, for example, has 10,000 embedded systems worldwide, hundreds on the seabed in routing boxes between cables, and there is no physical way of checking them. Some will work and others not, with the worst failures expected on calls routed through Third World countries which may be behind in their 2000 checks.

There may be truth in some of the myths about the year 2000



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CASE STUDY

ONE of London's most vital businesses, which could bring the capital to a halt if it failed, has found tackling the millennium problem cheaper than it feared.

Despite a vast inventory of signalling, information and ticketing systems and hundreds of escalators and water pumps, London Underground has needed to invest £2 million, so far, to eradicate the bug.

"By comparison with our ongoing IT spend of around £500 million, it is not very significant," says John Horan, the Underground's year 2000 project manager. "The figure is lower than expected even though we found more systems at risk than we anticipated. We are working on 30 of the most crucial, and I am confident that we will beat our own deadline of completion by December next year."

The company decided to follow the partnership path in tackling the 2000 problem with the intention of patching systems as necessary rather than introducing wholesale replacement. It teamed up with ICL, the European IT systems and services company, to produce a protocol document that would mandate how the problem should be approached by all departments.

"We already had ICL supporting our systems," Mr Horan says. "We shared many of the same problems — building management systems, computer rooms, distributed systems and networks."

"Our IT is very devoted, with much of the processing taking place locally. We don't have the central mainframe dependency you would expect with an organisation of this size, although there are legacy systems from the Seventies. So the problem wasn't so much tackling huge, elderly applications; rather, it was the sheer number and variety of



Aiming for a signal success: "If just one or two systems fail, the stations will close"

## Howdy pardner, goodbye bugs

London Underground and ICL have been tackling the millennial challenge in tandem. By Tony Dawe

systems that had to be located, assessed and, if necessary, rectified."

The initial investigation into business systems revealed that LU had 127 applications that were business critical. In signalling and train information systems alone, there were 33 applications. More than 80 per cent of all systems needed work to prepare them for the new millennium. Some 25 key applications have already been updated.

As well as playing a big part in the investigation, ICL's team also helped LU to

overcome the difficulty of persuading suppliers to talk about the problem, help to identify components at risk and work jointly to find a solution.

The Underground has now moved on to operational and safety systems and buildings and stations, using two separate approaches. The first identifies components, such as automatic ticket machines, signals and closed circuit television to see how they could be affected.

The second takes a systems view over entire stations. "If just one or two

systems fail, the stations will close," says Mr Horan. "For instance, if the CCTV goes down, the driver may not be able to see if everyone is on the train."

He adds: "The investigations have been very successful and we are very pleased with the work ICL has done. But the 2000 challenge should not be seen simply as a problem. It is a great opportunity to move forward. This focus has given us the chance to rationalise the systems we use. We have been able to spot duplications and to do some pipe cleaning."

A London-based law firm has joined forces with a systems company to identify problems

## Doubling up for added effect

CHRIS ROBERTS considers himself the luckiest of information technology directors. Unlike so many who have encountered difficulty in persuading board members that the millennium bug is a serious problem that needs tackling now, Roberts has the managing director of Simmons & Simmons, the international law firm for which he works, as the sponsor of his year 2000 project, Tony Dawe writes.

The IT committee on which he serves also contains senior partners of the London-based firm. "I am in an ideal situation with senior people in the firm sponsoring the project and pushing me," he

says. "With the information we have gathered, it has been reasonably easy to obtain the £100,000 we have spent on the project so far and to get the budget correct for the next financial year."

Simmons & Simmons' approach to the problem has been to enter into partnership with SHL Systemshouse to identify the issues to be tackled and to overcome them without having to replace existing computer systems.

"The decision to work with SHL was taken early on because the company was already working on a project to assimilate our systems," says Roberts. "Finding the right partner is one of the

CASE STUDY

most important elements of a year 2000 project because you are not going to find all the answers on your own, however hard you try."

SHL started by carrying out an audit of hardware and software in the law firm's ten international offices and has so far identified 1,200 personal computers and 22,000 items of hardware linked to ten servers. Within this environment, the audit found 22 major classes of software in use and more than 17,000 licensed applications.

The next stage was to determine the year 2000 com-

pliance of these items, which was done by contacting manufacturers for a compliance statement and checking their Internet pages for compliance information.

The audit found that operating systems, network operating systems and server backup software all had potential problems with the century date change and that the major office software package with 1,000 licences and other common applications all required upgrades to cope with the millennium bug.

"Most of the applications can be upgraded and fixed and we are fortunate to have no legacy systems," says Roberts. "Upgrades to existing

software can be carried out as part of normal maintenance although some additional work is required but, with SHL, we have the manpower and funds to put all these changes into place during the coming year. Where upgrades cannot be achieved, alternative solutions are being investigated."

"The most important message to come across from this project is that good information is required to make informed decisions," adds James McDougal, SHL's project manager. "It is vital to understand the scale of the problem and to plan the work in a structured manner across all areas of the business."

# Happy new year, call your lawyer



IT MAY be the greatest party in history but there will still be plenty of lawyers working late, ready to hear that your system has crashed. Law firms specialising in information technology are already checking that their clients' systems are "millennium compliant".

The most important case so far with millennium significance is St Albans vs ICL. This suggested that, in the absence of any express reference to "quality" or "fitness for purpose", a contract for the supply of a software program was bound to imply that the program would be reasonably fit for its intended purpose. In other words, without some kind of get-out clause, software suppliers are implicitly responsible for their products coping with the date change.

In other words, suppliers of defective software will be liable... or will they? Go back far enough and you discover that, in order to save disk space, some contracts actually specified that year dates would be only double digit (for example, 1997 would only be recognised as 97). Such a system could not possibly have taken account of 2000.

That is why, as Clive Seddon, a partner with Masons, emphasises, every contract must be looked at individually. The absence, until recently, of any standard terms relating to the millennium means that what appears in any particular agreement is almost a question of luck.

Even if the contract does not look favourable, there are plenty of other defences sup-

Where there's a contract, you'll find a loophole. Edward Fennell looks at the legal implications of meltdown

In a soft market, some insurers are issuing millennium policies — but only where they are confident that no claim will follow. This usually means an expensive safety check for the client.

For some organisations, however, compensation after the event is not good enough. Computer failure could put them out of business. This means contracts for "business continuity" companies such as Adam Associates, which is buying computers at the moment. It guarantees its clients a fresh set of PCs within four to eight hours if their existing system fails.

In America, at least, the bug will make some lawyers rich. Last week *Computer Weekly* revealed that PC makers are facing a \$5 billion (£3 billion) claim from a Californian law firm. In the US, unlike Britain, a law firm can bring an action itself, taking up to a third of the award if it wins. If the case succeeds, the bulk of the award would be held in a trust for the estimated five million computer owners affected in California. Both IBM and Duxons, the UK electronics retailer, refused to comment on the implications.

No one quite knows when the bomb might go off

pliers could potentially summon. There is a "limitation defence" relating to when the equipment was supplied and a "state-of-the-art defence" (although many lawyers doubt whether this would carry much weight). Alternatively, suppliers could turn the tables on clients and say it was their fault for not having foreseen a predictable problem. They could even pass the buck to sub-contractors who supplied the system.

And, if the worst happens, they may try to palm the matter off to their insurers. Of course, one of the most acute problems is that, no matter how compliant your system may be, there is no guarantee that the same can be said of the systems with which you may be networked. Like collapsing dominoes, your system may crash

because of some non-compliant system beyond your control. That is why the industry is awash with questionnaires, drawn up or checked by lawyers, which aim to establish just how safe your partners' systems are. The first aim, as Oslwangs lawyer Victor Timon points out, is to gain information. But the secondary purpose is to gain legal ammunition in case things go wrong.

That said, some lawyers are advising contractor clients to be very careful about completing questionnaires. "If the operator sends you a one," says Seddon, "it is better to meet their representatives to talk rather than give written assurances. Contractors should avoid giving year 2000 conformance warranties. If you have to, ensure their scope is strictly limited."



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## Getting ready for that big date

DO...

- Take a complete inventory of all computer and security systems, telephone equipment, vault door locks and anything that may be controlled electronically using date information.
- Think about electronic data exchanges with customers and suppliers.
- Address the problem in small, manageable, prioritised chunks.
- Consider the longer term when selecting year 2000 software tools: many of them may have a future use.
- Plan to complete the project by the end of 1998, so that software will be running live for 12 months before 2000 arrives.

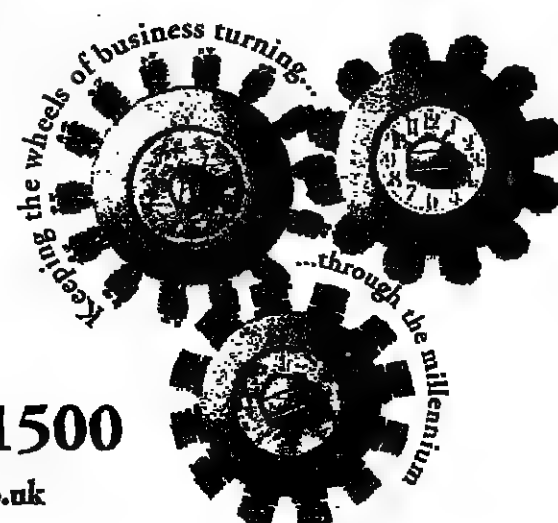
DONT...

- Underestimate the size of the problem which may exist outside the environment controlled by IT.
- Spend too much time examining the options, choosing partners or evaluating software: get the job done now.
- Believe solutions are going to get cheaper.
- Think you can outsource the whole problem.
- Assume all your IT suppliers are taking the problem as seriously as you: check they will be ready as well.

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY THROUGH THE MILLENNIUM**

There are few guarantees when midnight strikes on New Year Eve 1999. There are, however, ways of protecting your business against interruption. Adam Associates, the business continuity specialist, will ensure that you have access to millennium proof computer systems throughout this critical period.

If you are serious about the millennium issue, then contact Nick Tanner on the number below.



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58	WMAZ-TV Albany	299.6	18	38	38
59	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
60	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
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71	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
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73	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
74	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
75	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
76	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
77	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
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97	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
98	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
99	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38
100	MSB Inc. Phoenix	299.6	18	38	38

1987	Pctn	Int ylt	Exc. rpt	1997
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RTS (under 5 years)	127%	100%
	114%	101
	99%	80%

102 <sup>nd</sup>	Trans 14% 1988-91	102 <sup>nd</sup>	13.50	7.50	11.25 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>
100 <sup>th</sup>	Trans 15% 1988	100 <sup>th</sup>	14.58	7.29		
104 <sup>th</sup>	Trans 12% 1988	104 <sup>th</sup>	11.51	7.22		

105 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	Conv 10% 1000	105 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	+ 1/2	5.69	5.99	110 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	101 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>
103 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	Conv 9% 2000	104 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	+ 1/2	5.64	6.02	110 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	103 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>
100 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	Conv 8% 2000	104 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	+ 1/2	5.58	5.64	120 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>	103 <sup>2</sup> <sub>2</sub>

98-21	From 10% (2001)	100%	+ 1/2	9.20	6.25	UNDATED
98-21	From 7% (2001)	100%	+ 1/4	6.36	6.76	

100%	Trans. 94.5 2002	100%	+ 2x	8.91	5.69
100%	Trans. 94.5 2002	111%	+ 1x	8.71	5.75
100%	Trans. 94.5 2002	100%	+ 1x	8.68	5.75

100%	2003-2004	117%	+	2	65	65	117%	117%
100%	2004-2005	117%	+	2	65	65	117%	117%
100%	2005-2006	117%	+	2	65	65	117%	117%

97 <sup>th</sup>	Trans 7-6 2006	100 <sup>th</sup>	+ 2 <sup>nd</sup>	7.31	6.47	162 <sup>nd</sup>	160 <sup>th</sup>
99 <sup>th</sup>	Trans 7-6 2006	120 <sup>th</sup>	+ 4 <sup>th</sup>	7.16	6.50	179 <sup>th</sup>	152 <sup>nd</sup>
100 <sup>th</sup>	Trans 8-6 2002-03	100 <sup>th</sup>	+ 3 <sup>rd</sup>	7.62	6.78	180 <sup>th</sup>	147 <sup>th</sup>

479%	188%	W&A	120%	-	1%	11%
478	177	W&A	326	-	2%	12%
30%	16	W&A	120%	-	1%	12%
57%	27%	W&A	55	+ 2%		4%
400	400	W&A	441			4%
200%	201%	W&A	140%	- 21%		9%
200%	50%	W&A	140%			

### OIL & GAS

179	17%	W&A	156	+ 1%	1%	20%
50%	32%	W&A	26			
111	50%	W&A	71	-		
42%	14%	W&A	71	-		
520%	257%	W&A	491			0%
300	134	W&A	300	-		3%

30	415	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
31	416	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
32	417	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
33	418	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
34	419	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
35	420	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
36	421	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
37	422	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
38	423	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
39	424	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
40	425	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
41	426	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
42	427	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
43	428	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
44	429	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
45	430	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
46	431	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
47	432	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
48	433	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
49	434	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
50	435	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
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56	441	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
57	442	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
58	443	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
59	444	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
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67	452	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
68	453	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
69	454	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
70	455	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
71	456	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
72	457	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
73	458	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
74	459	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
75	460	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
76	461	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
77	462	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
78	463	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
79	464	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
80	465	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
81	466	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
82	467	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
83	468	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
84	469	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
85	470	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
86	471	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
87	472	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
88	473	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
89	474	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
90	475	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
91	476	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
92	477	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
93	478	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
94	479	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
95	480	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12
96	481	Coal Energy	282 1/2	22	12

OTHER FINANCIAL			
112%	64% Aberdeen Asset	97	4.5 19.6
48%	250 Amerscap	483 + 10	1.3 19.4
135%	105% BMD	120	5.5 13.1
87%	47% Bary Rich Mkt	49%	7.6 12.3

[illegible]

	Price	100 yd	Ers. prod
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Texas 9% 2008	120 <sup>12</sup> <sub>20</sub>	+ <sup>12</sup> <sub>20</sub>	7.48	6.37
Texas 8% 2009	113 <sup>14</sup> <sub>20</sub>	+ <sup>14</sup> <sub>20</sub>	7.07	6.40
Texas 6 1/4% 2010	98 <sup>18</sup> <sub>20</sub>	+ <sup>18</sup> <sub>20</sub>	6.35	8.43

Trans. 7/26/2012-15	111%	+ "A"	6.94	6.51
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1985 8% 2013	113 <sup>90</sup>	+ 4 <sub>1</sub>	6.90	6.44
1985 8% 2015	117 <sup>92</sup>	+ 8 <sub>20</sub>	6.82	6.38
1985 8% 2017	125 <sup>92</sup>	+ 4 <sub>1</sub>	6.95	6.41

100

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\_\_\_\_\_

Years 11, 21% 2003	1994	+ 1/2	1.07	3.30
Years 11, 43% 2004	1995	+ 1/2	1.03	3.13
Years 11, 38% 2005	2006	+ 1/2	1.02	3.12

1985 H. 24th 2015	1750	+	2	3.04	3.13
1985 H. 24th 2016	1750	+	2	3.04	3.12
1985 H. 24th 2020	1750	+	2	3.05	3.13

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

59.7, Breakst	806	-	7%	29	20.8
115 Brown & Jacks	38	+	7%	...	...
375 Brown Pkt	4164		21	23.0	...
115 Brown	123		22	22.3	...

WATER

50% Clinton Cards	100	-	1	2.7	14.3	265	203	East Surrey	286	+	24	49	114
65 City Cards	92%	...	...	...	...	370	740	Hydr	953	-	12	81	79
100 Country Goods	391%	...	0.9	14.9	...	740	101	Hydr Can Pd	117%	+	3	85	...

17 (2nd Group)	47.4	7	1	22.8	50.7	17.7	1	11.8	50.8	-	17	51	11.8
26 (FRA G)	31				970	593	1	10.5	948	-	17	48	10.5
47 (FRA F)	47.4	2	95	96	508	605	1	10.5	756	-	6	63	12.3
102 (FRA)	100				528	544	1	10.5	500	-			

70% Formicard	108%	2.9	45.2
267 French Conn	395	0.9	16.4
35% Games	37%	3.8	

#### ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET

231% H&L Hardware	31	2.7	43.2	217	170	Cole Invest	207%	1.2	18.4	
232% Hummels	316%	5	3.7	17.5	252%	180	Danmon Hldgs	220	1.8	15.8
233% Hampden Corp	91%	3.3	11.5	51%	26%	Freemages	254%	2.7	21.2	

117	Langsbury Bp	304	23	22	783	618	Southern News	737	+	1	34	195
297	Library	355	09		807	667	Southern Voice	807			33	167
277	Langsbury	361	+	57	807	171	Incarnate					

22% Merchant Retail	34% - 1%	1.3	24.7	Source: FT International
21% Mass. Bns.	23%	3.0	15.6	
53% Mass.	70% - 2%	2.8	21.6	

\* Price of suspension, † Ex. dividend, ‡ Ex. share, ▲ Ex. profit



## BRIEFLY NOTED

## Lure of Sussex

**OPERA:** With London's musical life in turmoil, the haven of Glyndebourne is proving attractive to restless spirits. The shortlist for the vacant job of general administrator of the private opera house is said to include such luminaries as Nicholas Payne, boss of the Royal Opera, Nicholas Snowman, maestro of the South Bank Centre, and Serge Dorny, manager of the London Philharmonic. Glyndebourne's owner, will clearly need to conduct interviews in sunglasses, lest he be dazzled by the lustre of the applicants.

**LITERATURE:** Douglas Hurd, prolific novelist and sometime Foreign Secretary, will be the chairman of judges for the 1998 Booker Prize for Fiction. "I feel like a young subaltern selected to lead a platoon on a particularly dangerous mission," he says.

**RECORDING:** For the first time in 70 years a record company has issued a new 78rpm vinyl disc made by musicians recording directly onto wax. The company is EMI, and this bold leap into the prehistoric past of recorded sound has been made to celebrate the label's centenary. On the 78rpm disc, which comes complete with the old red label depicting the dog listening to "His Master's Voice", the tenor Roberto Alagna sings an aria from *Pagliacci* and a ballad by Gaslini. The package also includes a modern CD and video of the event.

**THEATRE:** The stricken Liverpool Playhouse, currently in the hands of a court administrator, will benefit from a gala next Monday. Pauline Daniels, Ken Dodd, Gerry and the Pacemakers, the cast of *Brookside* and members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra will be among those raising cash for the theatre, which will close permanently on January 3 unless a saviour can be found. Information from Lizzie-Anne Meachin, 0151-709 5475.

**BROADWAY:** Natasha Richardson, who hasn't sung on stage since appearing in Richard Eyre's ill-fated production of *High Society*, will play Sally Bowles when Sam Mendes's production of *Cabaret* opens in New York in February. Alan Cumming plays the Master of Ceremonies, a part he took in Mendes's 1993 Donmar Warehouse staging. *Cabaret* will mark Mendes's Broadway directing debut.

# Will the glass wave hit a concrete wall?

It is now-or-never day for Lord Rogers's vast South Bank roof. Marcus Binney weighs up its pros and cons

Today the Arts Council faces the most difficult decision in its history: whether to approve in whole, or in part, a £115 million grant to London's South Bank Centre. The size of the sum eclipses the £78.5 million given to the Royal Opera House. As yet another London project, it may prove even more explosive.

The grant represents three-quarters of the total £151 million estimated building costs for development of the Festival Hall and six other venues, including the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Hayward Gallery, the Purcell Room, the Literature Centre, a new IT centre, and a new informal performance space, all brought together under a sensational "wave" glass roof designed by the Richard Rogers Partnership.

The easiest part is the Festival Hall. Here the Arts Council will be sharing the costs with the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has already agreed in principle to a contribution of £20 million. The architects in charge, Allies and Morrison, have already shown that they can provide value for money—opening up the stylish People's Palace restaurant on the riverfront and recreating the original transparency of the building by a simple policy of allowing no one to place anything against the windows.

Graham Morrison explains: "Our aim is a complete refurbishment of the building to its condition on opening in 1951. We can greatly improve the acoustics in the auditorium, which were excellent at the start. The problem is that much of the sound is now absorbed by inappropriate surfaces. We will sand down and polish the wood, give it a more solid backing so that it will be more reflective."

Best of all they intend to

reopen the roof terraces. "The accommodation at the top of the building was taken over when the administration was moved out of the old GLC building. Up here are the best views in London, with sunset over the Palace of Westminster and a panorama swinging right round to the dome of St Paul's," says Morrison.

The hard part of the Arts Council decision centres on contributing three-quarters of the £108 million needed for Lord Rogers's glass roof and everything within it. Almost everyone agrees that there is a desperate need to make the whole South Bank more attractive, thereby bringing in more people. Jo Kennedy, the project director, says: "Research shows that 95 per cent of people say the South Bank environment is appalling and puts them off coming."

The Arts Council aim is to increase annual visitors to the South Bank Centre from 3.3 million to 5.3 million. The brief called for something akin to the Pompidou Centre in Paris. So it is not surprising that Richard Rogers was chosen as the winner. He has always thought big. His wave roof is potentially the most beautiful London landmark of the millennium, taking the tradition of the 19th-century iron and glass station roof, and transforming it into a futuristic saddle shape which will look dramatically different from every angle.

And besides transforming the windswept, dangerous and dingy concrete walkways that surround the site, the roof would also have the virtue of covering up the now deeply unfashionable brutalist architecture of the Hayward and Queen Elizabeth Hall. Few would regret that: many would rejoice.

But the arguments against the Rogers scheme are formidable. An Arts Council insider comments: "The Allies and Morrison proposals were well documented and thoroughly researched. The Rogers scheme was more sketchy and less precise, particularly on the interface with the Festival Hall."

It is precisely this which works Margaret Richardson, the president of the Twentieth Century Society, into anger. "The Rogers wave roof rises so high that it will swamp the Festival Hall. Glass is only transparent when lit internal-

ly. For most of the time this will be perceived as a solid mass interrupting important views along the river."

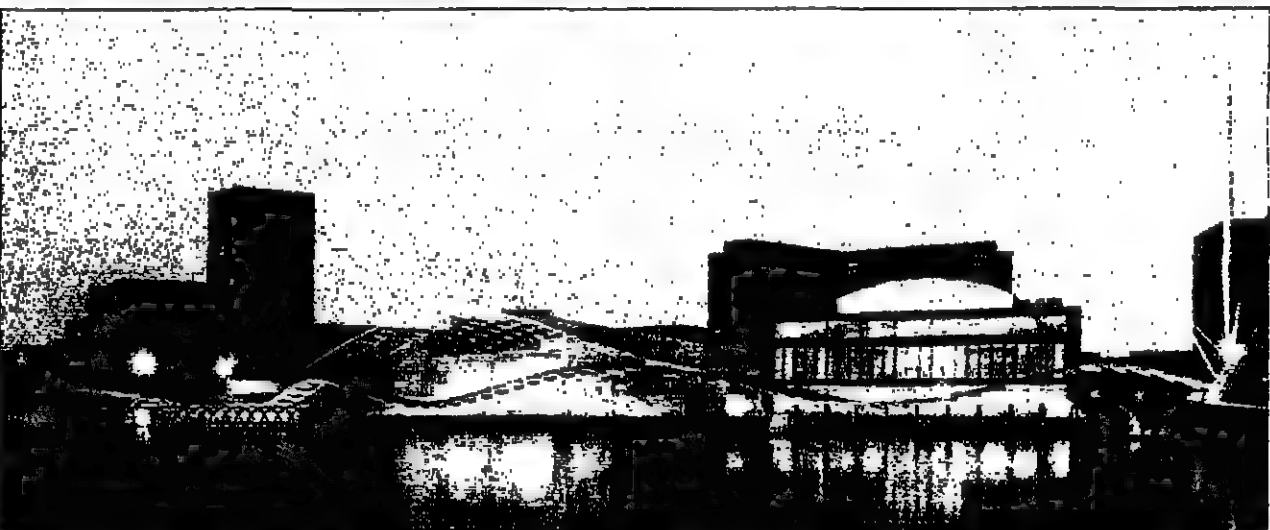
Even Morrison acknowledges: "The view of St Paul's from the Festival Hall roof depends on complete transparency." One way to reduce the impact might be to remove the tail of the "wave" from in front of the Festival Hall, leaving the riverfront of the Festival Hall in full view across the Thames.

The objection to the Rogers plan is made forcefully by Terry Farrell, perhaps not surprisingly, since his initial proposals for the South Bank were costed at a modest £15 million. Farrell, who also proposed an overall roof, says: "I hated and wished to undo the mega-architecture which wrapped the Festival Hall and the whole site in octopus tentacles of the same concrete design. I am concerned the Rogers scheme may be perceived as doing the same, enveloping the whole site in one kind of architecture."

Farrell placed a priority on creating an outdoor open space between the Festival Hall and the Hayward. By contrast the sheer height of the Rogers glass roof means it meets the Festival Hall at second floor level. Morrison, however, is not worried about the lack of an individual entrance for the Festival Hall. "We'll share the foyer with the other attractions."

While the Arts Council can easily agree a phased plan for the Festival Hall, it is all or nothing with the Rogers roof. And if it is nothing there is the risk of losing Paul Hamlyn's astounding offer of £17 million towards the scheme.

It can be argued that all Rogers's main buildings have been flawed: the Pompidou Centre because of the huge cost of maintenance; and the Lloyds Building because the brokers came close to moving out of it altogether. Yet the fact remains that these are among the great buildings of our time. The Arts Council has £200 million to spend on large-scale projects of national significance between 1998 and 2006. It requires colossal political courage to back the Rogers scheme—but there will never be a more prominent site, or one with the potential to attract more visitors.



The brutalist concrete of the Queen Elizabeth Hall (top) would be transformed by Lord Rogers's glass roof (below)

CONCERTS: Violinist Sarah Chang grows up dazzlingly; Haitink unites exiles; hearing problems

## Fine display of everything but the girl

Nothing, last Sunday, was quite what it seemed. In a cunningly devised programme, the violinist Sarah Chang's recital unfolded a series of transformations: a violin sonata which really belonged to a flute, a piano solo transfigured, and an opera extravaganza with violin as diva.

The evening had begun with the high-profile prodigy deferring to her pianist in the C major Sonata (K296) Mozart had written "for the harpsichord or pianoforte, with the accompaniment of a violin". Unfortunately, Charles

Abramovic was determined to defer to Chang, and the violin's alto singing, its accompanying figures and long sustained notes rang out almost crudely in the presence of a pianist self-effacing almost to vanishing point.

The transformation which really mattered, though, was that of Chang herself. The rap little girl in the party frock has become the beautiful young woman in the designer gowns—two of them per evening, it seems. And her Richard Strauss Sonata for Violin and Piano in E flat, following the Mozart, confirmed that, for

**Sarah Chang**  
Barbican

the time being, the blithe melodic freedom of the child has gone, and with it the sense of wonder and delight which was so much a mark of her playing. In its place is a resilient, high-energy virtuosity which travels well and, I suspect, is pretty crease-resistant.

Chang is now 16, and the musical adolescence of a prodigy is, after all, one of the trickiest times of all. Prokof-

lev's Sonata No 2, which she turned to after the interval, recasts its original flute writing in such a way as to exercise every muscle of the violin, particularly in the breadth of its Kazakh folk melodies, and the vigour of its finale.

Chang certainly gave it a good work-out. But one can only hope that once she has got through a period of what feels like survival, some of that sense of delight and surprise in sound itself, and some of that original buoyancy of both bow and imagination, will return.

Chang's Chopin Nocturne

HILARY FINCH

## Paradise retained

LPO/Haitink  
Festival Hall

BERNARD HAITINK's concerts with the London Philharmonic are usually red-letter dates in the orchestra's diary, and Sunday's was no exception. It featured a typically thoughtful programme, bringing Britten's *Les Illuminations* and Mahler's *Symphony No 4* together under one of the season's themes, the composer in exile. Both these composers spent a significant period in America: although his Fourth was written before the outsider Mahler was driven from Vienna, *Les Illuminations* was the first work Britten completed abroad.

Both works also call for a soprano soloist, and Janice Watson displayed her versatility while being especially radiant in the Britten. The song cycle's brilliance of sound derives from the combination of its strings-only accompaniment and a bright soprano such

as Watson's, and she spun long lines of pure, golden tone. Her soft singing was exquisitely controlled, but sometimes it seemed as if beauty of tone was at the expense of verbal clarity in Rimbaud's poetry.

The LPO strings were on splendidly incisive form, responsive to every demand Haitink made from the podium. Together they caught the imagery of each number, from the racing energy of the beginning to the resignation of the end and the dark austerity along the way.

Haitink's account of the Mahler was also dark—but slow and deliberate. The journey the symphony depicts through fantasy land towards a child's Paradise was less carefree than often: rather than playing up the nightmarish episodes, Haitink cast clouds over the supposedly happier ones. He painted in the detail with particularly vivid orchestral contributions and the leader Joakim Svanheden's menacing, mistuned solos in the scherzo were highly effective. Watson's words could once again have been sharper and perhaps then her playful song might have sounded less generalised. But, supported by refined playing, she sang glowingly at the close as Paradise was at last attained.

JOHN ALLISON

## Mahler in recession

RSNO/Lazarev  
Edinburgh

ALTHOUGH a considerable asset to the city in other ways, the Edinburgh Festival Theatre is not a great place for orchestral concerts. The acoustics are discouragingly dry and the shape of the stage does not suit the layout of a large modern orchestra. So why has the Royal Scottish National Orchestra abandoned the Usher Hall to play there?

The ironic answer is that, having made all the necessary arrangements for an alternative Edinburgh venue well in advance of the scheduled closure for refurbishment of the Usher Hall, the RSNO found that the City Council's application for National Lottery funds had been rejected and work on the hall indefinitely postponed. By then it was too late to correct the situation and the orchestra now has to go through with it, whether the public likes it or not.

While it is obviously bad luck for the RSNO, it is probably also true that more could be done to improve the Festival Theatre acoustics. As a performance of Mahler's Seventh Symphony vividly demonstrated, the strings in general and the violins in particular are at a severe disadvantage. It is not all loss, however. The two "Night Music" movements, where the strings have a more chamber-like role to play, were heard with unusual clarity. The outer movements, on the other hand, were starved of expressive and muscular nourishment.

Some aspect of these impressions must, of course, be attributable to Alexander Lazarev's interpretation. Happily, he does not distort Mahler as he tends to distort Brahms. On the contrary, he treats the score with immense respect. He seems, however, to have little instinctive feeling for the Mahler idiom and personality. In spite of some fairly specious rubato in one of the more lyrical passages, he treated the first movement much as one might approach a Shostakovich first movement, with long-term patience rather than bar-by-bar inspiration. As for the problems associated with the finale, a determination to get through it as quickly as possible is not the answer.

GERALD LARNER



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كتاب النظم



As London prepares to hold *The Front Page* again, Joe Joseph exposes the truth behind the myth of the hack as hero

# Type cast as a paper lion

The really thrilling part of being a journalist is that when momentous world events unfold you can find yourself bang in the thick of the action. This means you could be standing so close to powerful world leaders that you can actually ask them, straight to their face, key journalist questions such as: "Mr President, do you happen to possess an international telephone jack that would enable me to use my computer to file 1,200 words back to my newsdesk?"

That's what makes watching portrayals of journalists on stage and in movies so enthralling. The creature who materialises before you is almost always an indefatigable seeker after truth; a champion of good over evil; more cunning than a fox; wittier than Woody Allen; a whizz with women.

But when most journalists look in the mirror, they don't see this mirage. What they see is a person who spends their working day devising headlines for stories about a council plan to pedestrianise the bit of Mansfield Avenue outside the new Marks & Spencer's.

Not that any of this ever dents the public's appetite for newspaper movies in general, and for *The Front Page* in particular. Cynicism, humour, fast dialogue and a softspot for the profession by the two former hacks who wrote it have made *The Front Page* the most successful newspaper story ever told. And retold.

Now nearly 70 years old, the play is being revived once again. Griff Rhys Jones plays the star role of Hildy Johnson. You know Hildy; he's the ace Chicago reporter who is about to leave newspapers for a new life as a married man with a genteel job in advertising when his editor, Walter Burns (played by Alan Armstrong), persuades him to cover the last hanging to be staged in the state before the introduction of the electric chair.

Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, the two journalists-turned-screenwriters who wrote it, had intended to be brutal about the brash world of tabloid journalism that they had both got to know so well. But they must have weakened — spawning, in their wake, a Hollywood factory of movie journalists who are courageous and clever, hard-drinking, but diligent, and morally hot about injustice. Part detective, and cooler than cowboys, hacks became a reliable Hollywood standby.

But from *All The President's Men* to *Welcome to Sarajevo*, from *Citizen Kane* to Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night*, from Kirk Douglas in Billy Wilder's *Ace in the Hole* to Burt Lancaster in *Sweet Smell of Success*, and from *The Year Of Living Dangerously* and *The Killing Fields* to *La Dolce Vita*, *Burnt* of *The Vanities* and *The Paper*, screen journalists have rarely been fully believable. At least not to anyone who has worked in a newspaper office.



Cary Grant as Walter Burns and Rosalind Russell as a distaff Hildy Johnson swap wisecracks over a hot typewriter in *His Girl Friday*, adapted from *The Front Page*

This is because what journalists actually do would not make very exciting cinema. Very few journalists get around to depositing deceitful presidents of America. Even fewer sneak into telephone kiosks and change into Superman. In reality, what most journalists do is sit around for much of the day smoking each other's cigarettes and drinking coffee from special vending machines which recreate the authentic flavour of coffee, providing coffee is supposed to taste like it was made from mud, hot water and Tipex correction fluid. Naturally, we all strive for accuracy. But where absolute truth is impossible to pin down, your average responsible journalist will always check with at least two reliable colleagues that what they are about to write sounds plausible enough to get past the night lawyer.

It really is great to hear Humphrey Bogart, playing a newspaper managing editor in the 1932 film *Dead End*, telling a wide-eyed cub reporter: "So you wanna be a reporter. Here's a bit of advice. Don't ever change your mind. It may not be the oldest profession, but it's the best." If it ever brings a teeny tear to a journalist's eye, it's only because they're laughing so much.

You find even the most elegant writers stumbling when they face the hurdle of casting a journalist. Tom Stoppard's play *Night and Day* has always struck me as among his crackles. Earlier this year Alan Bleasdale, one of Britain's finest television dramatists, created for us the award-winning war correspondent Guy Foster when he updated Francis Durrbridge's whodunnit, *Melissa*.

Foster was the deluxe Fleet Street model from central casting. He fumed about injustice; he had a

vodka problem; he still used a manual, portable typewriter; he hungered after "truth". When, while walking past a TV shop while out shopping, he caught sight of a war report on the news, he dramatically dropped his carrier bag full of Fairy Liquid and Weetabix and jumped on the next plane out of Heathrow.

Disillusioned with journalism, Foster then tried (unsuccessfully) to write a novel, which was really just a pretext to deliver this outburst: "I've spent 14 years of my working life attempting to write the truth. . . . Avoiding anything that was made up, or mixed up, or coming with spin. Writing fiction is basically all about the art of lying, skillfully. . . . It should be easy now. For the very first time since I last wrote fiction I have permission to cheat and to lie. I can't cheat. I can't lie. I can't fly. I can't turn a train into a plane. I see a train. That's all I see. I haven't seen

a plane all day." Well, honestly, what could you possibly say, except that sitting indoors wasn't going to help. The lad should have got himself to Garwick, and pronto.

Even Lou Grant, everyone's favourite TV hack, was a preposterous confection. Presumably we were not supposed even to notice that Ed Asner had changed from a comic newsroom boss in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* to a serious-minded, crusading news editor when he moved from Minneapolis to the Los Angeles Tribune and got his own show. Suddenly Lou had a social conscience, reflected in everything from scripts dealing with rape and prostitution to his policy of hiring human misfits such as Joe "Scoop" Rossi and Animal, the staff photographer.

Asner's newshounds weren't journalists. They were romantic, surrogate detectives, chasing and

exposing crime and wrongdoing. This is partly because exposing crime and wrongdoing gives a show some zip, and partly because a film depicting traditional journalistic office pastimes — tossing press releases in the bin, whining about why the fax machine is always jammed and sniggering about what their rivals on other newspapers decided constituted snappy news that morning — would make a series of altogether too gritty realism.

But don't go thinking there is any risk that Hollywood will fall out of love with the newspaper movie any time soon. Why? Not because it adores journalists. Rather more because, as Matthew Arnold noted, "journalism is literature in a hurry" — which happens to be just how the movie business likes its literature.

● *The Front Page* is in preview at the Donmar Warehouse, London WC2 (0171-309 1732) from tonight

## Misery begins at home

THE gloomiest corner of the Royal Court's New European Writers' Season is squatted by Dea Loher, a German writer with the same God-forsaken humour as Heiner Müller at his most depressed. It is a no man's land of dead leaves, cigarette ends, dim lighting and toppled chairs. Yet this anonymous attempt of industrial Germany is the promised land for Yanne, a young Macedonian who has dodged the call-up in Yugoslavia.

He seeks refuge with a family of impoverished Macedonian exiles, hoping that the revolutionary credentials of his father will ease his passage. The stooped figure of Hristo, after all, fought alongside his father, Yanne finds instead a family whose respectability and idealism is built on a lifetime of secrets and lies.

Bald, beak-nosed and bitter, Christopher Ettridge's Hristo deeply resents Yanne's

### Stranger's House Ambassadors

presence. His wife, Terese (Gillian Hanna), it transpires, does a little prostitution on the side. "It's just a business," she says. "I keep me alive," she says. "I don't think your private life's any of my business," protests Yanne. "It is, it is," shouts Terese. And she's right: Yanne occupies the room she uses to earn the cash. It is a discomfiting moment, one of the few to shed light on the play's themes.

Mary Peate's production looks at other moments like a torch with a dying battery. Terese's daughter Agnes falls for Yanne's elusive Macedonian charm. Her sleazy husband, Jörg, seethes with unconvincing cowardly rage. But the soundtrack of dripping water, passing traffic and echoey voices proves more unsettling than the performers themselves.

Loher's bleak vision of Germany is unmistakably cynical. Yanne's presence gradually becomes as much a source of pricking conscience as it is an excuse for animosity. As his expectations of his adopted home become tarnished, so does he.

Rhys maps this transition much more convincingly than his relationships. Only Caroline O'Neill's sexy jaded bar owner seems happy to see him. Everyone else desires or avoids the need for atonement. When it comes, after 90 minutes, the relief around the theatre is palpable.

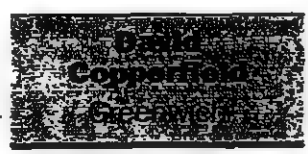
JAMES CHRISTOPHER

## Happy coincidences

This is one of the three theatres being driven on the rocks by the London Arts Board's decision to take all the funding that might have gone to them in order to heap it upon a fourth. Greenwich, the Gate and the King's Head will therefore be left to shrivel. The action of the LAB is indefensible, and no defence has come forth from a board that contains only one active worker in the arts.

This version of Dickens's semi-autobiography will presumably be the last work Matthew Francis adapts and directs here. Inevitably, compression emphasises coincidence. David no sooner steps along a city street than he meets a crucial somebody from his past. Everybody turns out to be connected with everyone else, but where the sheer extent of the 650-page novel reduces the oddness of this, on the stage the unspoken suggestion that life is simple is a nuisance.

The multiple interconnections of the story are visually interpreted in Lez Brotherston's set, where a double



staircase of various kinds of steps climbs around the stage by way of bedrooms, offices and upturned boats, while more steps come forward to a seashore and ropes hang overhead for later use in the storm where Steerforth meets his death. This staging helps Francis's own swift succession of scenes, which flow smoothly into one another, too suavely when the passage of years is required but reminiscent of the way people do disappear from immediate experience.

The book, and now the play, contains some unforgettable characters, most of them equipped with a personal catchphrase as though they were turns in a radio comedy: "Donkeys!" "Something will turn up." "Ever so humble." David himself is a wet. Francis is probably right to leave out the statement that this dew-eyed chap ends up as a famous

writer; even in the novel this beggars belief, and still more does it seem incredible when watching the hero blithely fail to understand the nature of people until well into his twenties.

Learning to look beyond the superficial is a major theme, but since the adaptation is required to show us what is in front of his unobservant eyes, the hero inevitably turns into someone weirdly slow-witted. Curiously, while Damien Matthews as the adult David emphasises the naivety, his younger self (Paul Bailey), who remains present throughout the play — a good touch — preserves a clearer vision.

These reservations aside, the production creates a pleasant evening, greatly helped by the performances of Peter-Hugo Daly as a Uria Heep bent like a crushed question mark, Des McAleer and Brian Poyser as Messrs Micawber and Dick, and an array of matrons, bristling or batty, from Miranda Kingsley and Susan Porrett.

JEREMY KINGSTON



Paul Bailey and Damien Matthews — two David Copperfields for the price of one at Greenwich

### GREAT BRITISH HOPES

#### Rising stars in the arts firmament DANIEL EVANS

Age: 24.

Profession: Actor.

**Flying high:** He's playing Peter Pan in the National Theatre's new production directed by John Caird, which opens next Tuesday. Rehearsals were "really thrilling," according to Evans. "The set of *Gyps and Dolls* was still up in the Olivier, so it was like flying through Manhattan."

**Child's play:** "We had children in for a day, making little playlets with us. We were supposed to observe, but everyone just regressed. But the play is moving; it's about the loss of innocence."

**Perpetual youth?** He left Guildhall School of Music and Drama early, in 1994, to play the Boy in the RSC's *Henry V* and Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then he was a teenager in

Peter Gill's *Cardiff East* at the National and is now playing Petya, the youngest Rostov, in Radio 4's *War and Peace*. "I look forward to growing up one day."

**Welsh connection:** Brought up in the Rhondda Valley, he won prizes for verse-speaking at the National Eisteddfod in 1990 and 1992. "Welsh is my first language. My parents are both teachers, my eldest brother is a surgeon, the next a dentist. I'm the weirdo of the family."

**National debut:** He strode the Olivier stage in 1990 for the Lloyds Bank Theatre Challenge for young people — in Welsh. "It was a musical and I played a politician, who was also a preacher and poet."

**Heroes?** "My teacher wrote to Ian McKellen in the 1980s. He agreed to meet me and was terribly kind and kept in



touch. It's bizarre working with him [McKellen plays Hook in the new production]. Otherwise my heroes tend to change, but Mark Rylance's Hamlet was fantastic."

**Screen credits:** Kerry Sherlock's Welsh-language *Cameleon*, which did well at the Berlin festival. "I play the brother of a Second World War deserter."

**Ultimate ambition:** "I'd like to have a company of my own and do the classics in Welsh."

HEATHER NEILL

HE WAS friends with everybody that he smoked dope with, and he has smoked dope with everybody. Howard Marks is a very nice man. The PLO, the IRA and the Mob all loved him; they carried his drugs, they stopped his ass getting whipped in prison.

Today, it seems, we love him too. The British have always been suckers for a gentleman criminal and the finest Oxford, Mib, and a voice as rich as the resin that made him his absent millions.

Now he wants to share a joint with the rest of the world. The thick smoke exhaled by the crowd sharing *An Evening With Howard Marks* at the Shepherd's Bush Empire owed more to Philip Morris than Pablo Escobar, but the sight of the man puffing away

## Dope friend

COMEDY

on stage provoked the kind of hysteria normally reserved for striptease.

For a glorified book reading the evening did have a curiously pornographic feel. Tales of smuggling were illustrated with slides of raw hashish arranged in a variety of provocative poses. Yet Marks's skills extend far beyond being able to stay vertical after chain-smoking marijuana cigarettes. The man based a career on talking himself into some of the world's most

dangerous situations and boy, can he talk.

It would be a shame if his drug-smuggling tales kept his audience restricted to dope fetishists. He is a compelling raconteur with a ragged sexiness. Had he not turned to smuggling he probably would have made a fine politician. He fielded questions with a measured charm that would go down a storm in the House.

Unfortunately, his audience does not have his taste for intelligent discussion. In such an atmosphere of mob rule it was impossible to voice the questions that should have been asked. Marijuana may never have killed anybody, but the organisations it funded most certainly did. So who was responsible for that?

HETTIE JUDAH



The Royal Opera

'a revelation... impossible to fault'  
Rodney Milnes, The Times 1997

'a triumph... I laughed, I cried, I cheered,  
I came out walking on air'  
Rupert Christiansen, The Daily Telegraph 1997

Once in a while the odd thing happens...

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Susan MacDonald on the increasing need for multilingual secretaries, especially from foreign banks and European law firms

# Demand grows for language skills

## TIME SAVERS

A DOCUMENT spilling on to a new page by a few lines can be annoying: there is a shrink to fit facility in Microsoft Word's Print Preview mode — the button is on the bottom row of the toolbar.

This can make everything look too cramped and you might want to undo it. If you haven't saved the document, hold down the Control key and press Z. This doesn't work if you have already saved the document but there is an emergency measure you can take: hold down the Control key and press A. This will select all the text. Then choose Format/Font and change the font size.

This will also change the size of any headings you've inserted in a different point size to the text, but it may be more simple to go through the document highlighting them, rather than highlighting the text around them and changing its size. And you can always write a macro to automate the process.

You could also avoid this problem by making a copy of the original document before you shrink-fit it, using File/Save As.

With much fanfare, the British Government is preparing to take over the presidency of the European Union on January 1 — and there has been a last-minute scramble to brush up on languages. About 150 ministers and civil servants have signed up for crash courses in French, but civil servants organising Britain's six-month term of office believe that unless their French really is up to standard it would be better to speak in English for business purposes. Even Tony Blair has been told: "Your French is good, but not that good."

This is something that multilingual secretaries know already. Companies employing multilingual secretaries require linguistic excellence — and often a good commercial knowledge of the foreign language they speak. In addition to this language knowledge, these super secretaries should have excellent IT skills and a knowledge of the company's area of work.

And despite all this, multilingual secretaries sometimes earn much the same salaries as non-linguistic secretaries. Hazel Cook and Sarah Spyles, two multilingual secretaries with large organisations in London, agree that their salaries do not reflect their prowess in languages. On the other hand, Babette Grolman, who also works in London, says that hers has always reflected the fact that she speaks

several languages.

Ms Cook, 29, speaks French and German. On leaving university with a modern languages degree, she took a secretarial course. She spent nine months working as a secretary in Munich and then went as a secretary to Brussels for four years. She learnt Italian at evening classes while there.

She returned to England six months ago and now works as a PA for Société Générale in the City. "It is in London that the need for multilingual secretaries is greatest, especially among foreign banks and European law firms," she says. "My main aim has been to use my language knowledge as a secretarial course and has done a two-year marketing course. She felt she needed these qualifications because when she left university people said: 'All right, you've got languages, but what skills have you got for the job?'"

Neither of them knows foreign shorthand and Ms Grolman, 32, who has worked for two years as a



Babette Grolman's command of German, English and Italian is reflected in her bank salary

PA and office manager in the London office of Deutsche Hypo bank, does not have shorthand in any language. However, she feels that her command of German, English and Italian is reflected in her salary because she uses them all the time.

Her masters degree in translating specialised in law and she has

worked for an American law firm and as a translator. "My languages abilities have always been reflected in my salaries," she says.

Robert House of Language Matters recruitment agency thinks the language market is buoyant and growing. "There has been a 20-40 per cent increase in the past two or three years," he says. French and

German are the most sought-after languages, followed by Italian and Spanish. The need for Russian, Japanese, Mandarin and Cantonese speakers is now on the increase — whereas the need for Arabic has fallen off.

Ian Archibald of Multilingual Services recruitment agency says that during the boom of the 1980s

there was an increasing need for multilingual secretaries, but the recession hit these secretaries hard as finance houses folded their tents and crept away.

Demand has increased over the past year but companies, he says, are far more demanding in the skills they want in addition to languages than they were in the 1980s.

Apart from supplying secretaries to companies in Britain (especially London), specialist agencies seek secretaries to work in continental Europe. "We mainly supply secretaries for Paris and Frankfurt because they have important financial centres," Mr House says. "The markets in Madrid and Milan are not buoyant enough to produce many opportunities."

To work with languages, people either need to have grown up in a bilingual home or to have been trained to commercial standards. Both agencies agree that more than 90 per cent of those on their books are graduates who learnt their languages at university. This is because the old two-year, post A-level secretarial courses that included in-depth commercial language training have disappeared.

Mr Archibald says "Some progressive companies provide language training for their secretaries, but it seems, the number doing so has not increased along with the expansion of the market."

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## Forest set deadline on legal action

By RICHARD HOBSON

NOTTINGHAM Forest have set a deadline of Christmas Eve for Anderlecht to respond to claims for compensation, after the Belgian club this year admitted having made a payment to the referee of the controversial 1984 UEFA Cup semi-final, Phil Soar, the chief executive, said Forest will take the matter to the civil courts if Anderlecht refuse to acknowledge their letter by December 24.

The Forest players involved in the second-leg tie — which Anderlecht won 3-0 to ensure a place in the final against Tottenham Hotspur — and the club are employing a Belgian lawyer to prepare separate claims which they believe could realise up to £2 million.

Constant Vanden Stock, a former Anderlecht chairman, told Belgian television last September that Curucco Muro, the referee, was paid £18,000 the day after the game. Earlier this year, Anderlecht admitted paying blackmail money to two men stretching back to 1984.

Soar has written to Anderlecht asking for discussions about an out-of-court settlement. He said: "Anderlecht know how we feel on this matter and they also know we would like to hear from them. If that does not happen by December 24 then we will, in all likelihood, lodge our claim with the courts."

The claim is based on estimated revenue which would have been generated from a two-legged final against Tottenham. Forest said their share of gate receipts and television income would have been close to £1.5 million. In addition, the players — including the England internationals, Steve Hodge and Garry Birtles — due foregone win bonuses and subsequent improvements that would have been made to their contracts.

Uefa said initially that they were powerless to impose punishment on Anderlecht because the offence took place more than ten years ago. However, they have since imposed a one-year ban from European competitions which will come into force when Anderlecht next qualify. Forest have put a case to Uefa to be given that place instead, although Anderlecht have appealed against the ban.

Forest were 2-0 up after the first leg at the City Ground. In Belgium, they had what appeared to be a fair goal disallowed by Muro, who also awarded a dubious penalty against Kenny Swain. Muro, from Spain, died in a car accident ten years ago. Anderlecht lost the final on penalties.

## FOOTBALL

# United aiming to shift Europe's balance of power

FROM OLIVER HOIT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT, IN TURIN

FROM the outside, it looks just like another dreary, non-descript piece of suburban architecture, a great sprawl of a building that lurks on the Turin ring road. It used to be the flagship factory of Fiat, the car giant that bankrolled Juventus, but it fell into disuse and they turned it into a hotel. Last night, Manchester United checked in.

Having taken up residence at one faded symbol of an Italian institution, Alex Ferguson and his players will tonight attempt to highlight the almost intangible decline of another. A sixth successive win in the European Cup Champions' League is their target against Juventus in the Stadio Delle Alpi. If they achieve it, their opponents will slide out of the competition, humbled by the team that seeks to claim its mantle as the most respected side in Europe.

United, of course, are already safely through to the quarter-finals, the next stage of the competition. If all had once assumed that this would be the decisive tie, the one that decided group B, United, 3-2 victors over the Italian champions at Old Trafford at the beginning of October, have been so dominant that they have scythed away the pressure already.

They will be playing for pride, to try to avenge the 1-0 defeat last season that shook them to the core. Juventus, though, will be com-

peting with the urgency and the tension of a team that fears its supremacy may have begun to disappear.

That disparity showed in the press conferences of the respective coaches yesterday. Marcello Lippi was passionate and dogmatic, trying to lift his team and his supporters towards the win that will give them a fighting chance of sneaking into the last eight as one of two best losers. Ferguson, once clasping his hands together in mock prayer that Peter Schmeichel, his goalkeeper, might be reduced to the role of a spectator, was all magnanimity and courtesy.

"The fate of Juventus does not concern me," Ferguson said. "My only concern is

## GROUP B

Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	5	3	0	0	14	4	18
Juventus	5	3	0	0	11	8	9
Feyenoord	5	2	0	3	7	10	6
Bohemia	5	0	0	5	2	12	0

TODAY: FC Koeln v Feyenoord; Juventus v Manchester United.

Manchester United. I think Juventus are a fabulous club, a class club and I have great respect for their coach. Actually, I hope that they get through but not at the expense of us losing.

In the first half of last season's match here, there was no expression in our play. The players were overpowered and intimidated but I don't think that will happen tomorrow.

## Strachan secures his future with Coventry

GORDON STRACHAN, the Coventry City manager, has signed a contract that will keep him at Highfield Road until 2003. The offer of the extension to his original agreement, which runs out in 1999, was made by Bryan Richardson, the Coventry chairman, almost two months ago, but Strachan claimed he had not had time to sign it.

Coventry won only one of 11 FA Cup Premier League matches in that period, but Richardson still feared the manager of Ray Harford in the manner of Ray Harford's departure from West Bromwich Albion last week.

Harford had also persistently declined to sign his contract and, eventually, was lured away by Queens Park Rangers.

Strachan said yesterday: "It's only a bit of scribble on a piece of paper."

Gary McAllister, the Coventry captain, has resumed training and is likely to return against Tottenham Hotspur at Highfield Road on Saturday after a knee injury.

Plans for a radical overhaul of the Football League, including a first division of just 12 teams, will be discussed at a meeting in London today involving all 72 Nationwide League clubs. There are five proposals: maintain the existing structure; three divisions of 20, 26 and 26 teams; four divisions of 18 to 20 clubs; six divisions of 12 clubs; and a "super league" of 12 teams followed by two of 24 and another of 12.

row. In relation to last season, I think we have to show how we have improved in terms of our authority.

"Playing in front of a packed house of 75,000 here will be absolutely brilliant for my players. They will love it. But if we were to perform badly then a lot of questions would be asked. We have got to continue the upward trend we have shown in the Champions' League and this is the biggest test for us."

That Ferguson, who has left Paul Scholes at home in England nursing flu, should even be in a position to refute the idea that United would show the great Juventus mercy was an indication of just how far his side has travelled since last season, when Lippi's team taught them a lesson at home and away.

Now United, truly firing on all cylinders, so confident in their renaissance goalscorer, Andy Cole, and his burgeoning partnership with Teddy Sheringham, that they felt able yesterday to pull out of the auction for the services of River Plate's Chilean striker, Marcelo Salas, are in the ascendancy, afraid of no one.

Lippi, who will be forced to start the game without the suspended Alessandro Del Piero and the injured Nicola Amoruso and Didier Deschamps, will field Daniel Fonseca and Filippo Inzaghi in attack. Compelled to chase the game, he promised yesterday that Juventus would not throw all caution to the wind.

"We have a great conviction that we can beat Manchester United," Lippi said. "We believe we will win even though they are currently one of the strongest teams in the world. Tomorrow, we will see how great they have become."

Increasingly, the signs are that United are indeed on the verge of greatness. In five attempts, they have never beaten an Italian club in Italy but this time the odds are good. Ferguson was so relaxed about the talents of his team that he even brushed aside a question about whether the lavishly gifted Juventus midfielder, Zinedine Zidane, was his favourite player. "All my favourite players wear red jerseys," he said with a smile.

JUVENTUS (4-4-2): A. Peruzzi — A. Borsari, G. Perin, V. Maccioni, M. Tardivo — A. Del Piero, G. Coris, Z. Zidane, A. Tacchinardi — F. Inzaghi, D. Fonseca.

MANCHESTER UNITED (4-3-3): P. Schmeichel — G. Neville, G. Palmer, H. Bury, P. Healy — D. Beckham, R. Johnson, B. Cole, E. Sheringham, G. Cole.

Referee: G. Valentini (Florence).



Schmeichel, the United goalkeeper, exudes confidence at a press conference yesterday

## Dalglish pays the price for Newcastle's spending cuts

By DAVID MADDOCK

KENNY DALGLISH is a guarded man. During a round of golf one day, Gordon Strachan, his playing partner, inquired as to how many shots Dalglish had taken on a particular hole. "How many do you think I have?" came the reply.

At his press conference to discuss Newcastle United's final European Cup Champions' League tie, it was interesting to hear him touch on the subject of transfers, and the state of his squad at St James' Park. For once, the Newcastle manager let his guard down, although, given his nature, it was probably a deliberate move.

The North East club has been strangely quiet in the transfer market, buying only cheap, young players of potential and recruiting experienced men in free transfers. It is an unsatisfactory situation, and the manager finally hinted at his frustration yesterday.

"We need players," he said. "No team in history has been successful without spending money."

For weeks, the Newcastle board has stored up problems

by failing to provide the funds Dalglish requires to plug the gaps left by injuries. Now the dam has burst, with an ignominious exit from the Champions' League swiftly followed by two crippling defeats in the FA Cup Premier League.

The visit of Dynamo Kiev tonight is likely to provide further evidence of the problems that face Dalglish. The Ukrainian champions have progressed serenely through the qualifying stages and offer a formidable examination. They are likely to be under strength, with players on yellow cards rested, but will still be more than a match for the English club.

"They have been the best side in our group by some distance, and considering the strength of the group, that is some compliment," Dalglish said. "They have quality. It's not the size of your squad that counts as much as the quality."

The quality Dalglish referred to comes, in particular, in the form of Andrei Shevchenko and Sergei Re-

brov, a forward partnership of quite devastating potential, and a defensive line led by the exemplary Alexander Golovko.

All three have been targets for clubs across the Continent. Shevchenko is possibly the most wanted player in Europe at present, with Milan, Juventus and Manchester United all registering an interest. Rebrov is similarly coveted, and Golovko has been watched by Liverpool on several occasions.

Dalglish would also be interested in the trio, after his first-hand experience, had financial constraints not forced him to lower his sights somewhat.

So it is that Dalglish will probably start the match tonight with a half-fit Faustino Asprilla. Ian Rush is back in training, but Newcastle's striking forces are too depleted to expect anything more than an honourable failure against Kiev.

NEWCASTLE UNITED (probable 4-4-1-1): S. Galloway — S. Watson, D. Patterson, S. Pearce, A. Preece — K. Gillespie, R. Lee, D. Batty, J. Barrett — J. D. Tennant — F. Asprilla.

DYNAMO KIEV (probable 4-4-2): A. Shevchenko — S. Dmytriyev, A. Golovko, A. Bryukhov, A. Gush — S. Maslov, G. Kozlov, V. Vasyuk, A. Koltovskiy — S. Rebrov, A. Shevchenko.

## Italians ponder difficult equation

By MATT DICKINSON

THE clamour to make next year's European Cup Champions' League format consist of four groups of six rather than six of four carries an advantage other than simply increasing the number of games — and thus the swelling bank accounts — of Europe's leading clubs. It will also save the frantic calculations at the end of the matches tonight to discover which two clubs are the best runners-up, thus joining the group winners in the quarter-finals.

Already through are Manchester United, Borussia Dortmund, the holders, and, barring unprecedented goal-scoring feats against them, Bayern Munich and the impressive Dynamo Kiev. In group D, Real Madrid should cruise through with a home victory over an ailing FC Porto, while group F is delicately balanced, with AS Monaco and Bayer Leverkusen level and due to meet in Germany.

A convenient draw would leave them on 13 points and guarantee both a passage, Leverkusen taking one of the best runners-up spots. The other runners-up place is at present in the hands of Rosenborg, the champions of Norway, who knocked AC Milan out of the competition last year. A win at Olympiakos, bottom of group D, will be enough to ensure that they advance.

Any other scenario will send the competition into a mathematical frenzy. If Rosenborg lose, Juventus, on nine points, are next in line if they can beat United. Meanwhile, Paris Saint-Germain, also on nine points in group E, will be desperate for a heavy victory at home to Besiktas to give them a chance.

To determine who goes through, total points count first, followed by goal difference, goals scored and then goals scored away from home. Get your calculators ready.

Group A: P W D L F A Pts  
B Dortmund 5 3 0 0 11 3 12  
Paris 5 2 0 3 8 9 6  
Sparta Prague 5 1 0 4 5 10 2  
Gent 5 0 4 1 3 10 4

Group C: P W D L F A Pts  
Dynamo Kiev 5 3 0 0 13 4 11  
PSV Eindhoven 5 2 0 3 7 8 6  
Newcastle 5 1 1 3 5 8 3  
Borussia 5 0 1 4 3 12 1

Group D: P W D L F A Pts  
Real Madrid 5 3 0 1 11 6 10  
Rosenborg 5 2 1 2 7 6 7  
FC Porto 5 1 1 3 4 12 4  
Olympiakos 5 0 1 4 3 12 1

Group E: P W D L F A Pts  
Borussia Dortmund 5 3 0 1 13 8 12  
Paris SG 5 2 0 3 7 8 6  
Besiktas 5 1 1 3 5 10 3  
IFK Gothenburg 5 0 1 4 3 12 1

Group F: P W D L F A Pts  
Monaco 5 3 0 1 13 8 12  
S. Leverkusen 5 2 0 3 7 8 6  
Sparta 5 1 1 3 4 12 4  
Lille 5 0 1 4 3 12 1

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## SQUASH

## Nicol almost at the summit

By COLIN MCCULLAN

PETER NICOL is certain to be listed as world No 1 for the first time as a result of his win over Jansher Khan, of Pakistan, in Bombay last Saturday, but he will have to wait until February for his life ambition to become fact.

Under the mathematical formula which controls the ranking points distribution of the Professional Squash Association (PSA), Jansher will remain marginally ahead of the Scottish left-hander on the list issued on January 1.

Even if he were to lose in the early stages of the Heliopolis Open, which started yesterday in Cairo without Nicol's involvement, Jansher holds enough points in hand from the year to stay marginally ahead. Next year the PSA is to issue its ranking lists monthly

instead of the present two-monthly schedule, and Jansher will be the first victim of the change.

When the commitments and results for both players for the January periods of both 1997 and 1998 are thrown into the reshaped balance, the PSA has confirmed that Nicol will become only the third man to have displaced Jansher from his No 1 spot since January 1988.

Within the space of a month Jansher has lost control of both the world open championships he had won eight times and of the No 1 position from which he had been briefly removed only by Jansher Khan and Chris Dittmar in the previous ten

years. He missed the world open in Kuala Lumpur in November in order to avoid being drawn into a child maintenance dispute with his former wife, Violet Sob, in the Malaysian Sharia court.

In Egypt just before the world championships, Jansher claimed he could win every tournament around the world open to demonstrate his continuing superiority, then regain the title next year. Instead he was beaten in Qatar by Jonathon Power, of Canada, and in Kuwait and India by Nicol.

Bombay was Nicol's fourth successive win over Jansher this season and his first words were: "I have worked and waited so long for this." Now he has just to wait until February 1.

## SNOOKER

## Higgins takes positive step

By PHIL YATES

JOHN HIGGINS yesterday began the process of mentally erasing the worst defeat of his career by overcoming Martin Clark 5-2 for a place in the quarter-finals of the German Open.

Higgins was beaten unexpectedly by Gary Porting in the last 64 of the recent United Kingdom championship and described being forced to watch the event on television as "purgatory". His determination to assume a more active role here in Bingen was evident.

"I've got to get what happened at the UK out of my mind. It was a big blow, but it's stupid to dwell on things like that," Higgins said. "I missed far too many easy pots again out there [yesterday], but at least I got the result."

Clark won the opener on the pink, but Higgins took the next four frames, assisted by runs of 74 and 121. Clark stole the sixth frame on the black with a clearance initiated by a flaked green, and should have maintained his revival by winning the seventh in similarly tight circumstances.

The diminutive West Midlander, who overcame Steve Davis in the final qualifying round, required the black to reduce Higgins's lead to 4-3, but, with the cue ball under the bank cushion, his intended pot to a middle pocket went astray.

Higgins duly sank it and will now play Anthony Hamilton or Jason Ferguson.

There was more than a touch of *déjà vu* when Jamie Burnett, of Hamilton, recovered from a 4-2 deficit to defeat Gary Wilkinson 5-4 — it was the third time the Scot has prevailed by this margin in their three meetings in professional events.

Burnett, who beat Stephen Hendry in the second round of the Grand Prix last October, compiled a break of 51 in the seventh frame, survived a scrappy eighth, and added by a run of 44 in the decider, completed a notable fight-back.

On his first appearance in the quarter-finals of a ranking tournament, Burnett will meet Shokat Ali, Pakistan's leading player, or, more likely, Ken Doherty, the world champion.

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JUVENTUS V'S MANCHESTER UNITED

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